Middle Fork Coquille Commercial Thinning 2001
Environmental Assessment
South River Field Office
EA # OR-105-01-01

Diet Coq Commercial Thinning
Decision Documentation
Prepared: May 24, 2004

Decision:

It is my decision to offer the Diet Coq Commercial Thinning timber sale, further implementing Alternative 2 of the Middle Fork Coquille Commercial Thinning 2001 project as described in the EA (p. 4-9). This decision authorizes commercial thinning and density management on nine units located in Sections 29 and 31, T. 28 S., R. 8 W., W.M.

The configuration of the units offered for sale may differ slightly from those depicted in Appendix A of the EA. This is a consequence of minor adjustments made during final layout to address resource conditions, concerns or objectives. Final road lengths and locations may also vary slightly. The changes are consistent with the original proposal and do not reflect new information or constitute effects beyond the scope of those addressed in the EA.

Approximately 67 acres of General Forest Management Area will be thinned. This will yield an estimated 1,184 thousand board feet (MBF) of timber which is chargeable toward the annual allowable sale quantity (ASQ) for the Roseburg District. Density management on approximately 80 acres of Riparian Reserves will yield approximately 1,484 MBF of timber that is not chargeable toward the ASQ. As noted in the EA (p. 4-5), trees to be cut would primarily come from suppressed and intermediate crown classes, though a limited number of dominant and codominant trees will also be cut to meet density objectives. It is also anticipated that additional volume will be modified into the sale from the cutting of individual trees to clear yarding corridors, providing a safe working space at landings, and for tailhold trees and guyline anchors.

Access will be provided by existing system and non-system roads, supplemented by the construction of temporary spur roads. Approximately one-half mile of BLM Road No. 28-8-29.2 will be renovated and surfaced. Road Nos. 28-8-29.3 (Segment A), 28-8-31.0 (Segment C) and 28-8-31.5 (Segments A, B and C) will be renovated for a combined 1.04 miles and decommissioned after use. Six temporary roads will be constructed entirely within unit boundaries for a combined 0.79 miles.

Road 28-8-31.1, originally planned for renovation and installation of a temporary crossing over Lake Creek, was renovated and improved by Roseburg Resources Co. under reciprocal road use rights. This improvement included surfacing and the installation of a permanent bridge.

For roads to be renovated and decommissioned, and for temporary spur roads, the intent is to renovate or construct, use, and then decommission in the same dry season. If circumstances, such as extended fire closure, preclude this objective the BLM will require winterization and closure of the roads until the following summer, and decommission the roads following the completion of thinning and density management operations.

Surveys were conducted for Special Status botanical species identified in the EA (p. 20). No Kincaid's lupine was located, so the commercial thinning would not affect the species. No other Special Status species were found.

The 2004 *Record of Decision to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines* removed protection for species previously covered under the program and placed qualified species into the BLM Special Status Species Program. Of those species previously designated under Survey and Manage and addressed in the EA (pp. 19-20) only the Oregon shoulderband snail is designated as a Special Status Species. An evaluation of habitat was conducted and it was determined that there was no habitat in the project area. No other Special Status Species were identified which would be affected by the thinning.

In order to reduce the likelihood of introducing or spreading noxious weeds into the project area, contract provisions will require that, with the exception of logging trucks, all logging and road construction equipment be pressure washed or steam cleaned prior to being moved into the sale area, or at any time when the equipment is removed from the area and later returned.

On May10, 2004, the *Record of Decision for Management of Port-Orford-Cedar in Southwest Oregon* (POC ROD) was signed, amending the Resource Management Plan for the Roseburg District. The decision and the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (POC FSEIS) supporting it address effects of forest management practices and activities on the spread of Port-Orford-cedar root disease, caused by *Phytophthera lateralis.* The decision provides management direction for assessing risk and controlling spread of the disease, and maintaining Port-Orford-cedar as an integral component of the vegetative communities of which it is a part.

The Middle Fork Coquille Commercial Thinning 2001 analysis considered relevant factors addressed by the POC FSEIS and proposed mitigation consistent with management direction contained in the POC ROD.

The project area is located within the natural range of Port-Orford-cedar and was evaluated for the presence of healthy and diseased POC. Neither was identified within the sale area or along any roads designated for timber hauling. Consequently, the risk of spreading POC root disease is considered low. Regardless, measures described in the EA (p. 36-37) will be implemented to further reduce risk of spreading the disease. These include: equipment washing as previously described; sanitizing water drawn from sources in the sale area to be used for road construction and dust abatement with a solution containing Clorox bleach; restricting road construction and renovation to the dry season (May 15th to October 15th); restricting hauling on unsurfaced roads to the dry season; and decommissioning and blocking unsurfaced roads upon completion of thinning operations.

Rationale for the Decision:

The Roseburg District *Record of Decision/Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP 1995) directs that commercial thinning will be programmed in forest stands allocated to the General Forest Management Area that are less than 80 years of age in order to assure high levels of timber volume production (p. 151). The ROD/RMP (pp. 153-154) also directs that density management be applied within Riparian Reserves to ". . . control stocking, to reestablish and manage stands, to establish and manage desired nonconifer vegetation, and to acquire desired vegetation characteristics needed to attain objectives of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy." Alternative 2, the proposed alternative, accomplishes these objectives, Alternative 1 will not.

Comments on this analysis were received from three organizations and one State governmental agency. These comments were considered in the preparation of this decision. None of the comments identified issues or concerns which would constitute information not already considered and addressed in the EA, or which are not addressed in this decision. Following is a summary of some of the comments received and reference to how and where they are addressed in the Middle Fork Coquille Commercial Thinning 2001 EA.

- The Middle Fork Coquille River is listed as temperature impaired.

This is acknowledged (EA, p. 23). Measures to prevent thinning from contributing to elevated water temperatures are also described, which consist of variable width "no-harvest" buffers designed to retain and maintain direct stream shading immediately above and adjacent to perennial streams. (EA, p. 43)

- The thinning projects would involve the removal of old-growth trees along road rights-of-way and within units.

It is acknowledged that some remnant overstory trees could be removed for roads (EA, p. 5), but only where no feasible alternative access routes are available. Thinning would not remove any older, remnant trees. Thinning is to be conducted from below, removing trees predominantly from the suppressed and intermediate canopy layers (EA, pp. 4 and 5). Harvest of remnant overstory trees would not be consistent with thinning objectives because of the potential damage to the residual stand that would be caused by felling and yarding these larger, older trees.

- 112 acres of suitable spotted owl nesting/roosting/foraging habitat would be affected. These areas are complex and older and will not benefit from logging.

The presence of this suitable habitat was identified (EA, p. 17). It was noted that the older trees extend well above the understory that is even-aged and well developed. The BLM consulted with the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the effects of the thinning on the spotted owl, as discussed further on in this decision. The purpose of the thinning is to maintain forest health, increase timber yield from lands allocated as General Forest Management Area, and increase vegetative diversity in Riparian reserves. The summary of silvicultural modeling (EA, pp. 34-36) indicates that the stands will benefit from treatment.

- Withdraw the proposal until the effects of forest management on the spread of Port-Orford-cedar root disease have been analyzed in an EIS.

As addressed further on in this decision, an EIS for the management of Port-Orford-cedar has been completed. The analysis contained in the Middle Fork Coquille Commercial Thinning 2001 EA is consistent with the findings and direction contained in the EIS and accompanying ROD.

None of the thinning units are located within any Critical Habitat Unit designated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to aid in the recovery of the northern spotted owl, so the action would have no affect on the intended function of Critical Habitat Units.

The project will thin suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat for the northern spotted owl. In a biological opinion (I-15-04-F-0301), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that the action is "likely to adversely affect" the northern spotted owl because it will remove suitable nesting, roosting and foraging habitat. The opinion further provides authorization for an unquantifiable amount of incidental take.

The 2003 programmatic biological opinion for 2003-2008 management activities for the Roseburg District (I-15-03-F-160) concluded that commercial thinning will modify suitable murrelet nesting habitat and is considered "likely to adversely affect" the species. Surveys of potential suitable habitat within ¼-mile of the sale units were conducted in 2002 and 2003, with no detections of murrelets. As a consequence, the loss of individual murrelets is not anticipated and incidental take is not necessary.

Upstream migration by the Federally-threatened Oregon Coast coho salmon and Oregon Coast steelhead trout is blocked by a series of waterfalls located more than eight miles downstream of the sale area. The limits of Essential Fish Habitat are defined by the same waterfalls. The only potential effects to fish and Essential Fish Habitat would be associated with sediment. Analysis determined that the project would have "No Effect." As described in the EA (p. 42), ". . . there are no identifiable sources of sediment potentially great enough, nor realistic pathways by which sediments would be transported far enough downstream . . ." to affect coho salmon or Essential Fish Habitat. This is because "no-harvest" stream buffers would filter out any overland flow of sediment-laden water, road renovation and construction would be restricted to the dry season and employ sediment control practices, and timber hauling would be restricted to the dry season where temporary, unsurfaced roads are employed. Any sediment which might be generated would remain localized and be short-term in duration.

Monitoring:

Monitoring will be done in accordance with provisions contained in the ROD/RMP, Appendix I (p. 84, 190, 193, & 195-199). Monitoring efforts will consider the following resources: Riparian Reserves; Matrix; Water and Soils; Wildlife Habitat; Fish Habitat; and Special Status Species Habitat.

Protest Procedures:

As outlined in 43 CFR § 5003 - Administrative Remedies, protests may be filed with the authorized officer within 15 days of the publication date of the Decision Notice in *The News-Review*, Roseburg, Oregon.

43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (b) states that: "Protests shall be filed with the authorized officer and shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision." This precludes the acceptance of electronic mail or facsimile protests. Only written and signed hard copies of protests that are delivered to the Roseburg District Office will be accepted.

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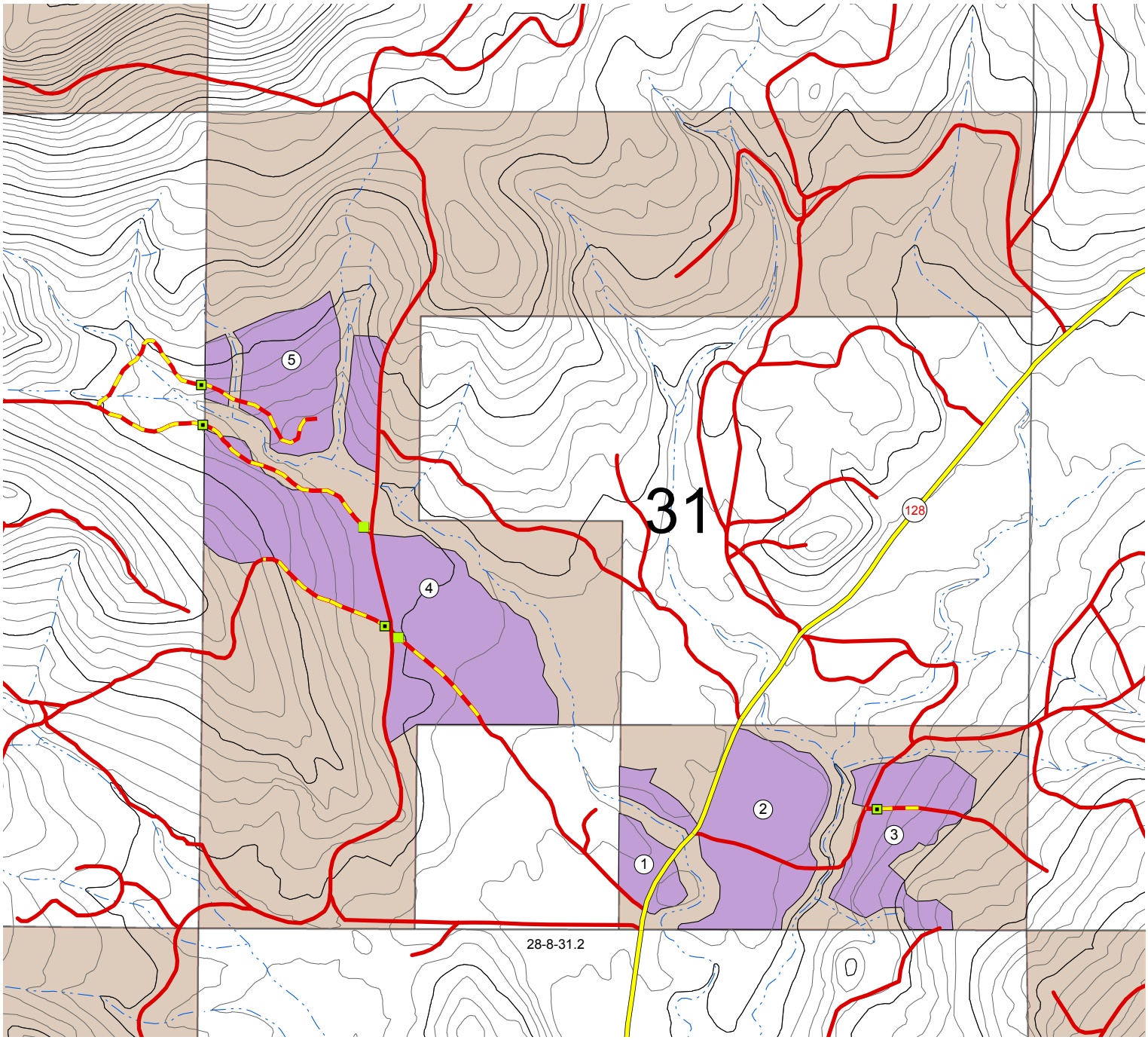
John Royce Date
Acting Field Manager
South River Field Office

DIET COQ COMMERCIAL THINNING



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Willamette Meridian, Douglas Co., OR.

Construct Roadblock
Thinning Area
Non-BLM Land
BLM (Coos Wagon Rd.) Land

County Road
Existing Road
Renovate, Permanent/Rock
Renovate, Decommission
Construct, Decommission
100' Contour
20' Contour
Stream

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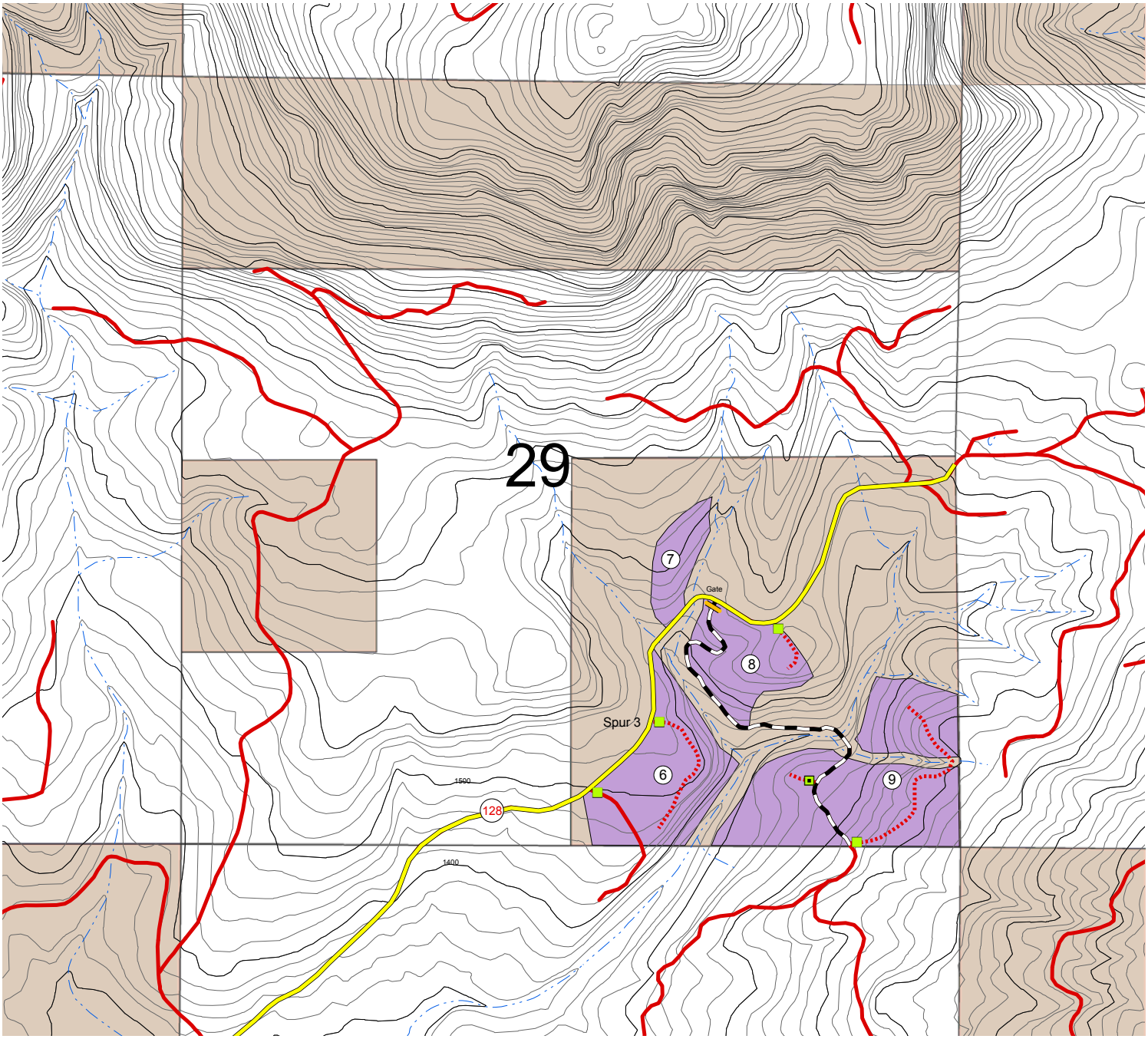

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