

**Middle Fork Coquille 2007
Commercial Thinning and Density Management
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

EA# OR-105-07-04

South River Field Office, Roseburg District

Date Prepared: February 20, 2008

Finding of No Significant Impact

The South River Field Office, Roseburg District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), has completed the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management project. The EA (pp. 5-14) analyzed two alternatives in detail, consisting of Alternative One - No Action and Alternative Two - The Proposed Action. As discussed in the EA (pp. 14-16), two additional alternatives were considered but not analyzed in detail.

Units proposed for treatment were identified through operational inventories, stand examinations, and field verification by silviculture and wildlife staff. The units are located in: Sections 5, 15, 29 and 33, T. 29 S., R. 8 W.; Sections 1, 11 and 35, T. 29 S., R. 9 W.; Sections 5, 9, 15, 27 and 33, T. 30 S., R. 8 W.; and Section 3, T. 30 S., R. 9 W., Willamette Meridian.

Unaffected Resources

As addressed in the EA (p. 16), the following critical elements of the human environment will not be affected under either alternative because they are absent from the project areas: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC); prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; wilderness; waste, solid or hazardous; and Wild and Scenic Rivers. No unique characteristics will be impacted (Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations - 40 CFR § 508.27(b) (3)).

Environmental Justice

The Middle Fork Coquille 2007 Commercial Thinning and Density Management project is consistent with Executive Order 12898 which addresses Environmental Justice in minority and low-income populations. As discussed in the EA (p. 17), no potential impacts to low-income or minority populations have been identified by the BLM internally or through public involvement. Project work will be performed by local contractors engaged in similar types of work throughout Douglas County. Correspondence with local tribal governments did not identify unique or special resources in the area that provide religious, employment, subsistence, or recreation opportunities.

Cultural and Historical Resources

Pedestrian surveys of all the proposed commercial thinning and density management units were conducted consistent with Oregon BLM/SHPO Cultural Resource Protocol. No cultural or historical resources were identified in any of the units. Consequently, there will be no adverse impacts to scientific, cultural, or historical resources (40 CFR § 1508.27(b) (8)).

Wildlife

As described in the EA (pp. 24), nine **northern spotted owl** home ranges overlap proposed units. Commercial thinning and density management will modify vegetative conditions on approximately 380 acres of unsuitable and dispersal-only habitat in these ranges (EA, p. 56). Vertical and horizontal cover will be reduced by tree removal, to varying levels of residual tree density. Spotted owls are expected to continue to use these stands, however, because post-project canopy cover will remain above 40 percent with an average tree diameter breast height of 11 inches or greater, figures widely used as a threshold for dispersal function (EA, p. 57).

Commercial thinning and density management on the remaining acres proposed for thinning will not affect any known occupied spotted owl home ranges given that more than 20 years of surveys in the South River Resource Area have not identified any other occupied sites in the project area (EA, p. 57). Post-treatment canopy closure and tree diameters in these areas will still provide functional dispersal habitat for continued use by resident single or dispersing owls.

No effect from noise disruption are expected because any project activities within the minimum disruption distances, as established by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Ref. # 1-15-05-I-0511), from any known spotted owl site; will be seasonally restricted from March 1 to June 30, subject to waiver if surveys determine owls are not present or have not successfully nested. This will ensure that noise disruption will not cause nest abandonment or premature fledging (EA, p. 57).

Effects to spotted owl Critical Habitat were analyzed through consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Ref. # 1-15-05-I-0511). This analysis determined that habitat availability and connectivity in CHU OR-62 after density management will continue to provide for the survival and recovery of spotted owls (EA, p. 57).

As stated in the EA (p. 58), commercial thinning and density management are not be expected to directly affect **marbled murrelets** through modification of suitable habitat. Only unit 29-8-33D contains areas of suitable habitat as defined by Potential Habitat Guidelines. Ongoing surveys of this unit have not indicated murrelet occupancy but detections in adjacent stands indicate that this area is used. Consequently, it will be managed as an unmapped LSR, using guidance from the South Coast/Northern Klamath LSRA and Potential Habitat Guidelines, to protect and enhance existing suitable habitat and accelerate development of additional suitable nest trees.

Surveys have detected murrelet occupancy in suitable habitat located between Units 29-9-11A and 29-9-11B. To address potential disruption associated with density management operations, these units will be subject to Daily Operational Restrictions, described in the EA (p. 59), from April 1 to August 5. No effect to murrelets from noise disruption is expected.

Effects to Critical Habitat were analyzed through consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Ref. # 1-15-05-I-0511). The analysis determined that habitat availability and connectivity after the proposed density management will not affect the ability of CHU OR-O6-D to provide for the survival and recovery of the murrelet.

Townsend's big-eared bats (*Corynorhinus townsendii*), **Pacific pallid bats** (*Antrozous pallidus pacificus*), and **fringed myotis bats** (*Myotis thysanodes*) might be expected in the project area where they would use large, remnant trees in the forests stands for roosting. As discussed in the EA (p. 60), these large trees will be reserved from harvest with few exceptions. Limited removal of remnant trees is not expected to result in the extirpation of these bat species, if present, from the project area. Density management in the Late-Successional Reserves and Riparian Reserves will benefit these species by accelerating the growth and development of large trees suitable for roosting. Consequently, the proposed action is not expected to contribute to the need to list these bat species as threatened or endangered.

Surveys were conducted for the Bureau Sensitive **Chace sideband snail** (*Monadenia chaceana*), **green sideband snail** (*Monadenia fidelis beryllica*), **Oregon shoulderband snail** (*Helminthoglypta hertlieni*), and **spotted tailedropper** (*Prophasaon vannatae pardalis*). None of these species were identified within any of the commercial thinning and density management units.

Density management could decrease foraging and nesting opportunities for **hermit warblers** and **Wilson's warblers**, the effects lasting 10-15 years. It will remove some structural complexity that provides habitat for the **winter wren**. However, maintaining "no-harvest" buffers along streams and unthinned areas dispersed throughout the density management units will provide refugia and continuity of use for these species. Retaining coarse woody debris, creating additional coarse wood, and fostering the development of structural diversity and canopy stratification will provide higher quality habitat in the long term.

Fisheries

There are no listed fish species in the project area or on the entire Roseburg District. As described in the EA (p. 31-32), the nearest occurrence of coho salmon and Essential Fish Habitat is more than two miles downstream from the nearest proposed unit. The only potential effect identified is with respect to sediment. With implementation of project design features and best management practices described in the EA (pp. 62-63) the risk will be localized and the risk of adverse effects to Essential Fish Habitat downstream of the proposed project area negligible.

Botany

The proposed commercial thinning and density management units were surveyed for Special Status vascular plant, lichen and bryophyte species identified in the EA (p. 36 and Appendix C) that might be expected in the project area. Results of the surveys were negative and no effect to any of the species is expected.

There will be no effect to any known sites of Bureau Sensitive fungi because of the spatial distances documented in the EA (p. 37).

While it is acknowledged that commercial thinning and density management could result in the loss of unknown fungi sites, it is not expected that this will lead to a need to list any of these under the Endangered Species Act because suitable fungi habitat is expected to remain abundant and well-distributed.

For the reasons described above, there will be no significant adverse impacts to any special status species (40 CFR § 1508.27 (b) (9)). The anticipated impacts will be within the range and scope of those analyzed in the *Roseburg District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (PRMP/EIS).

The project is consistent with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws (40 CFR § 1508.27(b) (10)).

Implementation of the District *Integrated Weed Management Program*, in association with project design and contract provisions will minimize risk of introduction or spread of noxious weeds in association with road construction and timber harvest. Measures will be implemented to eradicate existing weed infestations. Weed establishment will be discouraged by mulching disturbed areas, seeding with native grasses, or revegetating with indigenous plants. Pressure washing or steam cleaning logging and road construction equipment will be required prior to move-in order to remove soil and other substances that could be contaminated with weed seed or other propagative materials to reduce the risk of introducing weeds from outside the project area (EA, pp. 38-39). These actions are consistent with the requirements of the Lacey Act; the Federal Noxious Weed Act of 1974, as amended; and Executive Order 13112, Invasive Species.

Of the ten points listed under 40 CFR § 1508.27(b), the following were considered and were found not to apply to the proposed action: significant beneficial or adverse effects; significant effects on public health or safety; effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial; anticipated cumulatively significant impacts; highly uncertain or unknown risks; and no precedents for future actions with significant effects.

Based on the analysis of potential impacts contained in the environmental assessment, I have determined that the proposed action will not have significant impact on the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2) (c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and that an environmental impact statement is not required. I have determined that the proposed action is in within the scope of impacts anticipated in the PRMP/EIS, and is in conformance with the *Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP) for the Roseburg District, approved by the Oregon/Washington State Director on June 2, 1995.

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Date