

The Moon Creek Projects

Finding of No Significant Impact

December 17, 2008

United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management, Oregon State Office
Salem District, Tillamook Resource Area
Washington and Yamhill Counties, Oregon

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Abstract: The Bureau of Land Management proposes to conduct *two* different project types in the Late Successional Reserve portion of the Northern Coast Range Adaptive Management Area and the Riparian Reserve land use allocations. The first project is a density management thinning of approximately **420** acres. Thinning would occur on federal land in portions of Township 3 South, Range 8 West, Sections 3, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 24, Willamette Meridian. The second project involves coarse wood development treatments on approximately **300** acres. These actions would occur on federal land in portions of Township 3 South, Range 8 West, Sections 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, and 18, Willamette Meridian.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Introduction

The Moon Creek Projects Environmental Assessment (Environmental Assessment Number OR-086-08-05) documents the environmental analysis of the proposed projects. The EA is attached to and incorporated by reference in this Finding of No Significant Impact determination (FONSI). The EA analyzes density management thinning on approximately 420 acres of 31-58 year old, relatively dense Douglas-fir stands; and coarse wood development treatment on approximately 300 acres of conifer forest 80-110 years old that would not be treated with density management. The project areas include Township 3 South, Range 8 West, Sections 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, and 18, Willamette Meridian.

The EA and FONSI will be made available for public review from *November 5, 2008* to *December 8, 2008*. The notice for public comment will be published in legal notices by the Headlight Herald newspaper of Tillamook, Oregon. Comments received by the Tillamook Resource Area of the Salem District Office, 4610 Third Street, Tillamook, Oregon, 97141, on or before *December 8, 2008* will be considered in making the final decisions for these projects.

Finding of No Significant Impact

Based upon review of the Moon Creek Projects EA and supporting project record, I have determined that these projects are not major federal actions and would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27. There are no site specific impacts that would require supplemental/additional information to the analysis done in the *Salem District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement*, September 1994 (RMP/FEIS). Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the following discussion:

Context. The proposed projects are site-specific actions directly involving a total of approximately 720 acres of BLM administered land, along with actions occurring on various haul routes. These actions by themselves do not have international, national, region-wide, or state-wide importance.

The discussion of the significance criteria that follows applies to the intended actions and is within the context of local importance. The EA details the effects of the action alternatives; none of the effects identified, including direct, indirect and cumulative effects, are considered to be significant and do not exceed those effects described in the RMP/FEIS.

Intensity. The following discussion is organized around the Ten Significance Criteria described in 40 CFR 1508.27. The discussions below apply to both projects contained within the Moon Creek Projects Environmental Assessment.

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse.** Due to the proposed projects' design features, the most noteworthy predicted effects include: (1) acceleration of the development of some late-successional forest structural features on about 420 acres using density management and an additional 300 acres of coarse wood development projects. These activities include the development of large trees, gaps in the canopy, snags and down wood, various levels of overstory tree densities; (2) enhancement of the overall level of diversity in the area; (3) consistency with the ACS (Aquatic Conservation Strategy) objectives; (4) no loss in population viability of special status or special attention species (also see significance criteria #9 below); (5) slight, short-term increases in sediment are anticipated from road construction, road improvement and culvert work, timber harvest, and log haul; (6) no impacts to water temperature, streamflow or stream channel stability; and (7) social and economic benefits to the local communities through the supply of timber to local mills and some contract work associated with the Coarse Wood Development project.

None of the environmental effects disclosed above and discussed in detail in Sections 2 and 3 of the EA and associated appendices are considered significant, nor do the effects exceed those described in the RMP/FEIS.

2. The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety. Public health and safety was not identified as an issue. The proposed projects are comparable to other density management, and coarse wood development projects which have occurred within the Salem District with no unusual health or safety concerns.

3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas. There are no park lands, prime farm lands, or wildernesses located within the project area (EA, Appendix 2). No cultural resource sites have been identified within the project area. There are no federally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers within the project area. Under the design features for the density management treatments, all identified wetland and riparian areas would be buffered to protect resource values. Activities associated with the proposed Coarse Wood Development project are designed to accelerate the development of some late-successional forest structural features and are not predicted to impact wetlands. The High Peak/Moon Creek Area of Critical Environmental Concern and Research Natural Area is located partially within the Moon Creek subwatershed and is adjacent to a portion of one of the density management units and several small portions of the Coarse Wood Development units. None of the activities associated with the Moon Creek Projects would occur in or impact the ACEC/RNA in any way. There are no other known ecologically critical areas within or adjacent to the project area.

4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. Extensive scoping of the proposed projects resulted in four comment letters, of which three were project specific. The disposition of public comments is contained in Appendix 1 of the EA.

The effects of the proposed projects on the quality of the human environment were adequately understood by the interdisciplinary team to provide an environmental analysis. A complete disclosure of the predicted effects of the proposed projects is contained within Sections 2 and 3 of the EA and associated appendices.

5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. The proposed projects are not unique or unusual. The BLM has experience implementing similar projects in similar areas and have found effects to be reasonably predictable. The environmental effects to the human environment are fully analyzed in the EA. There are no predicted effects on the human environment which are considered to be highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.

6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration. The proposed projects do not set a precedent for future actions that may have significant effects, nor do they represent a decision in principle about a future consideration. Any future projects will be evaluated through the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process and will stand on their own as to environmental effects.

7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts. The interdisciplinary team evaluated the proposed projects in context of past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions (Appendix 3). No cumulative effects have been identified. A complete disclosure of the effects of the action alternatives is contained in Sections 2 and 3 of the EA.

8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause

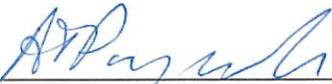
loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources. The proposed projects will not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor will the proposed projects cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources (EA, Appendix 2).

9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its designated critical habitat under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. In accordance with regulations pursuant to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended, informal consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) concerning the potential impacts of the Moon Creek Density Management Project, and Coarse Wood Development Project upon the spotted owl and marbled murrelet would be completed by including the appropriate project within the programmatic habitat modification biological assessment prepared by the interagency Level 1 Team (terrestrial subgroup) for the North Coast Province. The projects would be submitted for inclusion in the appropriate programmatic consultation for the years in which the project(s) would be implemented. If any of the projects are determined to not be in compliance with the standards of the programmatic consultation, the project would be changed to be in compliance with the programmatic consultation or a project-specific consultation would be conducted. In either case, all of the appropriate Terms and Conditions of the appropriate Letter of Concurrence would be incorporated.

Any ESA consultation with USFWS required on the subsequent maintenance of trees planted as a part of this project would likely be accomplished by inclusion of the maintenance work within the appropriate Programmatic Biological Assessment for Activities in the North Coast Province which might disturb northern spotted owls or marbled murrelets which is prepared by the North Coast Province Interagency Level 1 Team.

Consultation under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA) is required for potential impacts to Oregon Coast coho and is expected to be covered programmatically. A Programmatic Biological Assessment for "Low-Risk" Not Likely to Adversely Affect timber sales has been completed and the corresponding Letter of Concurrence has been received from NOAA Fisheries (2007/00171) for the Willamette Valley ESU's - "*Biological Assessment for Fiscal Year 2007-2009 Low Risk Thinning Timber Sales on the Mt. Hood and Willamette National Forests, and portions of the Eugene and Salem Bureau of Land Management Districts*". This Biological Assessment and Letter of Concurrence is expected to be extended to the coast range to cover the Oregon Coast coho ESU. The Environmental effects described in the Moon Creek Projects EA fall within the effects stated in the "Low-Risk Thinning" programmatic.

10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. The proposed projects do not violate any known Federal, State, or local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. The EA and supporting Project Record contain discussions pertaining to the Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Coastal Zone Manage Act, Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice), Oregon Scenic Waterways Act, and Executive Order 13212 (Adverse Energy Impact). State, local, and tribal interests were given the opportunity to participate in the environmental analysis process. Furthermore, the proposed projects are consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.

Prepared by: 
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12/17/08
Date

Approved by: 
William B. Keller
Tillamook Field Manager

Dec 18, 08
Date