United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
COOS BAY DISTRICT OFFICE
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1792/5400 (0R120)
EA OR125-08-01

January 18, 2008

Dear Citizen:

Please note that the scoping period for the Environmental Assessment (EA OR125-08-01) for the North Soup and Blue Retro Density Management Study on the Coos Bay District of the Bureau of Land Management will begin January 25, 2008 and end at close of business on February 25, 2008.

The proposed project is a density management thinning in support of a long-term research project located in the following areas: T.23S., R.09W. Sec. 16, WM and T.26S., R.12W., Sec. 25, 26, 35, & 36, WM. The description of Proposed Project is attached. It describes both the project and the research objectives.

You are invited to submit written comments to the team on any issues or concerns you may have regarding this project. An inter-disciplinary team of Umpqua Field Office and Coos Bay District resource specialists will address the issues and then prepare an EA.

Comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the above address during regular business hours (8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.), Monday through Friday, except holidays, and may be published as part of the EA document or other related documents. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

We have not scheduled a formal public scoping meeting. However, if you have questions, need maps or other information, feel free to visit our office to discuss the proposed project, or you may contact Frank Price at this office, (541)-751-4339. Our e-mail address is coos_bay@or.blm.gov and our mailing address is 1300 Airport Lane, North Bend, OR 97459.

Sincerely,

Kathy Westenskow (Acting)

Paul T. Flanagan
Acting Umpqua Field Manager

Attachment:
Description of proposed project

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

Project Name: North Soup and Blue Retro Density Management Study

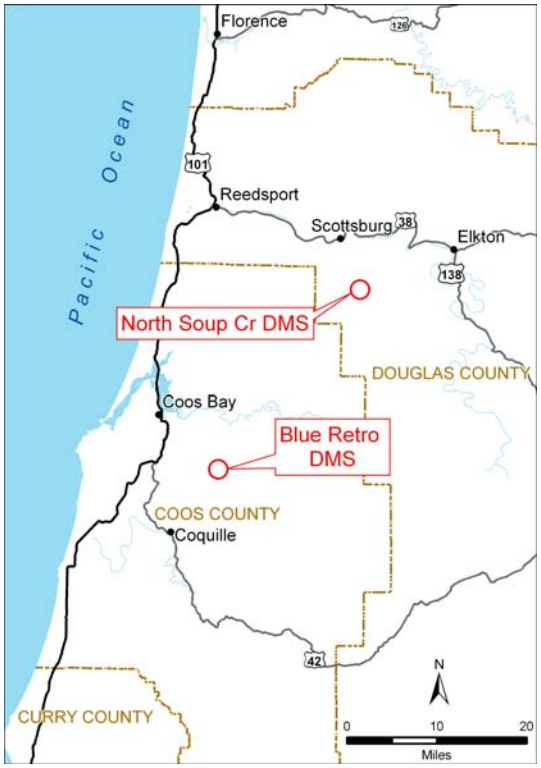
EA Number: OR125-08-01

Project Location: North Soup site: Sec. 16, T.23S., R09W., WM, (approximately 3 miles east of Loon Lake)
Blue Retro Site: Sec. 25, 26, 35, & 36, T.26S., R.12W., WM, (on Blue Ridge)

Need for the Action:
The purpose of this project is to implement the next phase Density Management and Riparian Buffer Study project on the North Soup and Blue Retro sites. Researchers at Oregon State University and Pacific Northwest Research Station have identified the next series of treatments to meet the research objectives that have been established for the Density Management and Riparian Buffer Study Project. There is an ongoing need for research that will test critical assumptions of the Northwest Forest Plan standards and guidelines and produce results important for habitat development.

Instruction Memorandum No. OR-2005-083, issued by the BLM Oregon State Office dated August 12, 2005, directs the BLM Districts, with established study sites, to implement the next phase of the Density Management Study. This EA covers the next phase of the Density Management and Riparian Buffer Study research project for those sites on the Coos Bay District.

Project Description:
The proposed project is to rethin the two Density Management Study Sites on the Coos Bay District. This treatment would initiate the next phase of this long-term research project on these sites. The Bureau of Land Management, Pacific Northwest Research Station, U.S. Geological Survey, and Oregon State University established the Density Management and Riparian Buffer Study in 1994 to demonstrate and test options for young stand management to meet Northwest Forest Plan objectives in western Oregon.



Locations of the Coos Bay District Density Management Study (DMS) sites.

The research study plan calls for the cutting and yarding to occur between September 30, 2010 and March 31, 2012. This would be the second thinning entry on the North Soup Site and the third thinning entry on the Blue Retro Site. The thinning would be accomplished by logging with a cable system and using existing roads for access.

Approximately 11.1 miles of road would be renovated, and approximately 1 mile of road would be improved. Road renovation would consist of clearing trees and brush, grading, and providing adequate drainage to older existing roads. Road improvement would consist of capital improvements, such as placing rock surfacing on existing dirt roads or adding culverts. Roads not needed for management or to provide access for research purposes would be decommissioned.

Down logs to provide habitat would be recruited by falling two dominant or co-dominant trees per acre. Existing decay class I or II fallen trees can be used to satisfy this requirement. Five trees per acre, in addition to stocking target, would be retained to be converted into snags if natural recruitment does not result in 5 snags per acre 10 years after thinning. Marking guidelines are designed to maintain or increase the percent of minor species in the stands.

Objectives:
Researchers at Oregon State University and the Pacific Northwest Research Station have identified the next series of treatments to meet the research objectives that have been established for the Density Management Studies Project. The research objectives are:

- Evaluate effects of alternative forest density management treatments on important stand and habitat attributes (large trees; standing and down dead wood; understory trees, shrubs, and herbs; vertical distribution of tree canopy; and spatial distribution of trees, shrubs, herbs, and dead wood)

- Determine treatment effects on selected plant and animal taxa (amphibians, arthropods, mollusks, nonvascular plants, and fungi)

- Assess the combined effects of density management and alternative riparian buffer widths on aquatic and riparian ecosystems

- Use Density Management Study sites to develop operational approaches to implement new prescriptions and improve methods for effectiveness monitoring of plant and animal taxa

- Use Density Management Study sites to share results of on-the-ground practices and findings with land managers, regulatory agencies, policy-makers, and the public

- Use results from the Density Management Study to conduct a long-term adaptive management process where management implications and policy changes are regularly evaluated and changed as needed

Additional information:
Additional information on the history, objectives, study design and description of component studies is contain in the *BLM Density Management and Riparian Buffer Study: Establishment Report and Study Plan, U.S. Geological Survey, Scientific Investigations Report 2006-5087*. This 3.91 MB; 151-page report can be viewed on line at: http://fresc.usgs.gov/products/papers/1538_Erickson.pdf .