

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE
Finding of No Significant Impact
For the 2011 Thinning Project
Environmental Assessment
No. DOI-BLM-OR-E060-2010-0001-EA**

BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Land Management prepared an Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-OR-E060-2009-0007-EA) which analyzed the effects of a commercial thinning and density management project within approximately 1100 acres of Matrix and 400 acres of Riparian Reserve Land Use Allocations (LUA) in the Calapooya, Mohawk River and Lower McKenzie 5th field watersheds. The locations are as follows:

- T. 14 S., R. 1 W., Section 31
- T. 15 S., R. 1 W., Sections 9, 17, 21, 22, 27, and 29
- T. 15 S., R. 2 W., Sections 1, 11
- T. 16 S., R. 1 W., Section 31
- T. 16 S., R. 2 W., Sections 21 and 29
- T. 16 S., R. 3 W., Section 13

The EA considered two alternatives: Alternative 1, which is the no action alternative and Alternative 2, which is the management action alternative.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the EA (OR090-EA-2010-01), and all other information available to me, it is my determination that the implementation of the proposed action is consistent with the objectives, land use allocations and management direction of the 1995 ROD/RMP.

This finding is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) criteria for significance (40 CFR 1508.27), both with regard to the context and to the intensity of the impacts described in the EA.

Context

The action alternatives would occur in the Matrix and Riparian Reserve Land Use Allocations (LUA) as designated by the 1995 Eugene District Resource Management Plan (RMP). The RMP anticipated that forest management activities would occur in the Matrix and Riparian Reserve Land Use Allocations. The action alternatives are in compliance with the 1995 Eugene District RMP.

Under the action alternatives, treatments would be designed to: (1) Produce a sustainable supply of timber (1995 ROD/RMP p. 34); (2) Provide habitat for a variety of organisms associated with both late-successional and younger forests and maintain valuable structural components, such as down logs and snags (1995 ROD/RMP, p. 34). Additional direction for road management directs us to provide and manage the road system to serve resource management needs (1995 ROD/RMP, p. 98).

The purposes of the actions in Riparian Reserves are to provide habitat for Special Status Species and other terrestrial species, and to maintain and restore water quality (1995 ROD/RMP, p. 23).

No actions would take place within stands older than 80 years of age. Further, thinning in the near term does not establish a firm commitment to harvest these stands

Intensity

I have considered the potential intensity/severity of the impacts anticipated from the 2010 Thinning Project relative to each of the ten areas suggested for consideration by the CEQ. With regard to each:

1. **Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.** The EA considered both potential beneficial and adverse effects especially for relevant resources such as wildlife. None of the effects are beyond the range of effects analyzed in the Eugene District "Final Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement" (November 1994), to which this EA is tiered.
2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.** No aspect of the action alternatives would have an effect on public health and safety.
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity of historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.**

There are no known parks, prime farmlands, wilderness or wild and scenic rivers in the project area. The proposed project is not expected to affect cultural resources, but if cultural resources are found in pre-project surveys, they would be assessed for significance. If necessary, the project would be redesigned to protect the values present.
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The effects of actions planned under the proposed action are similar to many other forest management projects implemented within the scope of the 1995 Eugene RMP. No unique or appreciable scientific controversy has been identified regarding the effects of the proposed action.
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The analysis has not shown that there would be any unique or unknown risks to the human environment not previously considered and analyzed in 1994 EIS, to which this decision is tiered. Thinning and density management treatments have been conducted for many years in the vegetation types typical of the project area.
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.** This project neither establishes a precedent nor represents a decision in principle about future actions. The proposed action is consistent with actions appropriate for the Matrix and Riparian Reserve land use allocations, as designated by the 1995 Eugene District ROD/RMP.
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The environmental analysis did not reveal any cumulative effects beyond those already in the EIS.
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or 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 historic resources.** There are no features within the planning area that are listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or are significant scientific, cultural, or historic resources.
9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** The proposed project area may provide habitat for Northern Spotted Owl, a threatened species. Generally, the proposed treatment areas show relatively small tree size; high tree density; uniform age distribution, and low amounts of useful large CWD and snags. Approximately 1400 acres of dispersal-only habitat would be affected. Approximately 700 acres of suitable habitat exists outside of the project area but within ¼ mile. None of the proposed treatment areas occur within a spotted owl nest patch. Existing habitat conditions, proposed

thinning, and past thinning at these sites are detailed in Table 1 of Appendix D of the EA. The affected sites have little suitable habitat and none meet the Fish and Wildlife Service take thresholds (40% suitable habitat in PHR and 50% in Core Area; USDI 2008).

Programmatic consultation has been completed for the project area. Two sites, Georges Knob and West Brush Creek, would be adversely affected by the proposed thinning. The Georges Knob site has the greatest amount of suitable habitat of any affected site, however harvest has occurred on adjacent private lands and approximately 200 acres of BLM-managed land in the PHR have been previously thinned. Additionally, the proposed thinning would occur as a large unit (Drury Creek 9) adjacent to the nest patch and would likely pose an obstacle to spotted owl use of the eastern portions of the PHR. The West Brush Creek PHR would be subject to similar conditions: little available suitable habitat, harvest on adjacent private lands has been high, and approximately 100 acres of BLM-managed land have been previously thinned. Regardless, the Service concluded that the proposed action would not jeopardize the continued existence of the northern spotted owl, nor would it destroy or adversely modify spotted owl Critical Habitat. Habitat modification from light/moderate thinning in the majority of the project area would be not likely adversely affect northern spotted owls because habitat function would be maintained and sufficient untreated dispersal habitat would be available in the project area.

In keeping with the relevant biological assessment, project actions are designed to maintain and improve habitat functions at both the stand and landscape scale. The action alternatives would accelerate the development of habitat features used by northern spotted owls such as large trees and snags, multiple canopy layers, herbaceous and shrub vegetation, and large coarse wood debris. Spotted owls would be expected to continue to utilize treated areas because post-project canopy cover would be maintained at 40% or greater, a figure used as a threshold for dispersal function (EA, p. 25).

The proposed action would have no effect on any listed fish species (EA, p. 28).

None of the effects to listed species would be beyond the range of effects analyzed in the 1994 EIS.

- 10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The proposed action does not threaten to violate any law. The proposed action is in compliance with the 1995 Eugene RMP, which provide direction for the protection of the environment on public lands.