UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE
Finding of No Significant Impact
For the Hills Camp Thinnings Project
Environmental Assessment
No. DOI-BLM-OR-E060-2010-0003-EA

BACKGROUND

The Upper Willamette Resource Area, Eugene District BLM proposes to implement commercial thinning and density management projects on approximately 1040 acres in the Lower McKenzie and Little Fall Creek 5th field watersheds. The sale names and locations are as follows:

- Solomon Creek (T. 16S., R. 01W., sec 33, T. 17S., R. 01W. section 7)
- Boulder Creek (T. 17S., R. 01W. sec. 35, T. 18S., R. 01W., sect. 5)
- Wild Jack (T. 18S., R. 01E., sec. 19, T. 18S., R. 01W., secs. 7 and 9)

The Land Use Allocations for these acres are Matrix and Riparian Reserve. Project actions may include timber harvest, instream habitat restoration, road construction, road improvements and decommissioning.

The EA considered four alternatives: (1) No Action, (2) Maximum Acres Treated, (3) Minimize Permanent Road Density, (4) No New Road Construction or Ground Based Logging Systems in Riparian Reserves.

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 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 parks, prime farmlands, wilderness or wild and scenic rivers in the project area. The proposed project has been surveyed for cultural resources and found sites have received a no-harvest buffer 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 EISs to which this decision is tiered. Thinning have been pursued and accomplished 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 analyzed 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.

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 project area has not been designated as Northern Spotted Owl critical habitat. No nesting habitat would be removed or adversely affected by project actions. Depending on which Action Alternative, roughly 440-740 acres of Matrix land (65-75% of treated areas) and 160-320 acres of Riparian Reserve land (25-35% of treated areas) would be thinned and result in effects to spotted owl dispersal-only and dispersal-forage habitats due to degrading the quality and/or function of these habitats. Post-harvest canopy coverage is expected to be roughly 40-50%.

ESA consultation considers effects to general habitat due to habitat modification, and effects to site occupation and reproduction due to habitat modification and nesting behavior due to noise disturbance/disruption. Collectively these considerations result in an overall effects determination of project actions. Consultation was conducted under the two following batched Province BAs: *1)Biological Assessment of NLAA Projects with the Potential to Modify the Habitat and/or Disrupt Northern Spotted Owls Willamette Planning Province - FY 2011-2012, and; 2) Biological Assessment of LAA Projects with the Potential to Modify the Habitat and/or Disrupt Northern Spotted Owls Willamette Planning Province - FY 2011-2012*

Consistent with the above documents, the No Action Alternative would result in a *no effect* determination to spotted owls or their habitat. The Action Alternatives overall would result in a *may affect, but not likely to adversely affect* determination for all harvest units except Boulder Creek 35 where actions would result in a *may affect, likely to adverse affect* determination due to affects to the Osborn Knob site.

For Osborn Knob, this site has two site centers 0.75 mile apart that represent different known pair activity centers for the site. These are depicted as IDNOs 1939O (original nest location) and 1939A (subsequent alternate nest location). Thinning would degrade no acres in the IDNO 19390 Core Area and 83 acres (19% of existing habitat) in the PHR. In IDNO 1939A, thinning would degrade 37 acres in the Core Area (25% of existing habitat) and 148 acres (23% of existing habitat) in the PHR.

Overall, the site would experience adverse affects to pair occupation or reproduction because:

1) Even before any harvest would occur, both IDNOs are "at risk" for successful pair occupation and reproduction due to low amounts of habitat in their Core Areas and PHRs; and
2) Because harvest areas in Boulder Creek 35 are very close to, and contiguous with, the 1939A location, they probably represent forage habitat that is important to successful reproduction at the site (i.e., foraging habitat for adults, rearing areas for young).

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

/s/ _____ _____
Field Manager Date
Upper Willamette Resource Area