

**UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE
DECISION RECORD**

**OAK BASIN RESTORATION/RAC PROJECT
DOI-BLM-OR-E060-2011-0005-EA**

Background:

An Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) for the proposed Oak Basin Restoration/RAC Project (DOI-BLM-OR-E060-2011-0005-EA) were prepared by the Upper Willamette Resource Area, Eugene District of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). This project is located in T14s., R2w., sections 29, 30, and 33. This project is a joint effort between the BLM, Nature Conservancy (TNC) and an adjacent private land owner. The proposed project area totals 224 acres of prairie, oak savanna and oak woodland habitats. The majority of the acres (184) are located on adjacent private property, and the remaining acres (40) are on BLM managed lands. The 40 acres located on BLM lands (referred to as "Oak Basin") are proposed as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

The overall goals of the proposed project are to: help maintain, enhance, augment or restore the existing and historical extents of prairie, savanna and oak woodland habitats in the project area; to provide beneficial management for BLM Sensitive species associated with these habitats; and to contribute to the recovery of Fender's blue butterfly and Kincaid's lupine (T&E species).

Purpose and Objectives:

The Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan states that the BLM shall, "maintain, protect, or restore relevant and important value(s) of ACEC and other Special Areas..." (pg. 67). Oak Basin contains federally listed Endangered Fender's Blue Butterfly and Threatened Kincaid's lupine, as well as other BLM Special Status Species. The site has degraded over time due to human influences such as fire suppression, invasion by weeds, soil disturbance and management to favor Douglas fir forest. The Proposed Action would address needed management intervention to maintain the Relevant and Important Values of the ACEC; including the two T&E species populations, their habitats and the greater prairie, oak savanna and oak woodland habitats. The Proposed Action would also help to restore, enhance and augment these resources, and provide initial steps for future restoration actions.

Decision:

Based on the analysis documented in the Environmental Assessment (DOI-BLM-OR-E060-2011-0005-EA) and the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), it is my decision to implement Alternative 2 (Restoration Action) and all associated Project Design Features because it best meets the purpose and need of the project.

Under this alternative, the actions described in Oak Basin Prairie and Oak Habitat Restoration Title II RAC project would be implemented. Restoration actions would include mowing, manual and mechanical treatment of invasive species, removal of conifers, thinning of native oaks,

prescribed burning, seed collection, and native plant cultivation and planting. Activities occurring on BLM lands are primarily weeding, removing encroaching conifers in and between prairies, burning of prairie areas, and planting of native prairie and nectar species.

Compliance:

The Eugene District initiated planning and design for this project to conform and be consistent with the Eugene District's 1995 RMP.

BLM issued a record of decision in July, 2007 to amend the plans within the Northwest Forest Plan area to remove the survey and manage mitigation measure. In January, 2008 a lawsuit was filed, and in December, 2009 the presiding judge issued an Order granting Plaintiffs motion for partial summary judgment.

A settlement agreement between the parties was approved by the court on July 6, 2011. The agreement stipulates that projects within the range of the northern spotted owl are subject to the survey and management standards and guidelines in the 2001 ROD without subsequent 2001-2003 Annual Species Reviews as modified by the 2011 Settlement Agreement. The Settlement Agreement modifies the 2001 Survey and Manage species list; establishes a transition period for application of the species lists; acknowledges existing exemption categories (2006 Pechman Exemptions); and, establishes exemptions from surveys for certain activities. The settlement agreement is in effect until the BLM conducts further analysis and decision making pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act and issues a Record of Decision to supersede the Survey and Manage mitigation measure.

This project falls within the exemptions (meadow restoration) established by the 2011 Settlement Agreement.

Administrative Review Opportunities:

Any person adversely affected by this decision may appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, Office of the Secretary, in accordance with the regulations contained in 43 CFR, Part 4.

Approved by:

Christie Hardenbrook (Acting)
William O'Sullivan,
Upper Willamette Resource Area Manager

Date: 9/29/2011

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE
Finding of No Significant Impact
For the Oak Basin Restoration/RAC Project
Environmental Assessment
No. DOI-BLM-OR-E060-2011-0005-EA**

BACKGROUND

The Upper Willamette Resource Area of the Eugene District Bureau of Land Management prepared an Environmental Assessment for the proposed Oak Basin Restoration/RAC Project (DOI-BLM-OR-E060-2011-0005-EA), which analyzed the effects of restoration activities on a total of 224 acres of prairie, oak savanna and oak woodland habitats.

The EA considered two alternatives: 1) a no action, and 2) a restoration action alternative. Under Alternative 2, the actions described in Oak Basin Prairie and Oak Habitat Restoration Title II RAC project would be implemented. Restoration actions would include mowing, manual and mechanical treatment of invasive species, removal of conifers, thinning of native oaks, prescribed burning, seed collection, and native plant cultivation and planting. Activities occurring on BLM lands are primarily weeding, removing encroaching conifers in and between prairies, burning of prairie areas, and planting of native prairie and nectar species.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

On the basis of the information contained in the EA (DOI-BLM-OR-E060-2011-0005-EA), 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 as amended.

The implementation of any of the action alternatives would not have significant environmental effects and does not constitute a major federal action having significant effects on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared. 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 on a total of 224 acres. The majority of the acres (184) are located on adjacent private property, and the remaining acres (40) are on BLM managed lands. The 40 acres located on BLM lands (referred to as "Oak Basin") are proposed as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Project activities are expected to occur over a period of 3-5 years. Therefore, the potential impacts of the proposed action are of limited geographic extent and short duration.

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. Both beneficial and adverse impacts have been considered in the EA.** The proposed action would have beneficial effects on the abundance of listed plant populations and thus would contribute to recovery of these species (EA, pp. 25-47). The EA considered potential adverse effects of the proposed action on Kincaid's Lupine and Fender's blue butterflies and concluded that any potential adverse effect was immeasurably small (EA, p. 25) and within acceptable limits as established by the USFWS.
- 2. The degree to which the proposed action affects public health and safety.** No aspect of the Proposed Action 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 historic or cultural resource sites that would be affected by the Proposed Action.
- 4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** Restoration activities such as these are not expected to be highly controversial and are specifically recommended by the numerous plans, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plan for the Prairie Species of Western Oregon and Southwestern Washington (2010). No unique or appreciable scientific controversy has been identified.
- 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.
- 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.
- 7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** The environmental analysis analyzed the cumulative effect of the proposed action together with other related actions and did not identify any cumulatively significant impact.
- 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 EA concluded that the proposed action would have no adverse effect on endangered or threatened species or its critical habitat.
- 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 Federal, State, local law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. The Proposed

This action is consistent with the Eugene RMP.

Date:
9/29/2011

/s/ Christie Hardenbrook
Acting for William O'Sullivan
Field Manager
Upper Willamette Resource Area