



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Klamath Falls Resource Area
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IN REPLY REFER TO
5400 (014)

DATE:
June 11, 2009

DECISION RECORD FOR 2008 Juniper Disposal EA No. OR 014-08-06

INTRODUCTION

The effects of the disposing of western juniper by; 1) burning, 2) yarding and removing, or 3) leaving lay are analyzed in the 2008 Juniper Disposal Environmental Assessment (EA) #OR-014-08-06. The 2008 Juniper Disposal EA analyzed approximately 2,300 acres where western juniper has been cut and piled as a result of previous fuel hazard and rangeland restoration projects. This Decision Record applies only to the treatment of the western juniper units included as part of the proposed action in the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA.

The Klamath Falls Resource Area (KFRA) interdisciplinary team designed and analyzed the impacts of the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA based on: (a) current resource conditions in the project area, (b) the results of monitoring the previous decade of juniper utilization activities, and (c) meeting the objectives and direction of the KFRA Resource Management Plan (RMP). The proposals presented and evaluated in the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA reflect what the interdisciplinary team determined to be the best balance and integration of resource conditions, resource potentials, competing management objectives, expressed interests of the various publics that commented, and the concerns of surrounding communities.

This decision is in conformance with the Klamath Falls Resource Area 2008 Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (2008 ROD/RMP). The analysis supporting this decision tiers to the 2008 Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Revision of the Resource Management Plan of the Western Oregon Bureau of Land Management (2008 Final EIS).

Revision of a resource management plan necessarily involves a transition from the application of the old resource management plan to the application of the new resource management plan. A transition from the old resource management plan to the new resource management plan avoids disruption of the management of BLM-administered lands and allows the BLM to utilize work already begun on the planning and analysis of projects.

The 2008 ROD allowed for such projects to be implemented consistent with the management direction of either the 1995 resource management plan, as amended (1995 RMP), or the 2008 RMP, at the discretion of the decision maker.

This project is in compliance with the 1995 RMP, and meets the requirements designated in the 2008 ROD for such transition projects:

1. A decision was not signed prior to the effective date of the 2008 ROD.
2. Preparation of National Environmental Policy Act documentation began prior to the effective date of the 2008 ROD (Scoping on this project was initiated on March 25, 2008).
3. A decision on the project will be signed within two years of the effective date of the 2008 ROD.
4. Regeneration harvest would not occur in a Late-Successional Management Area or in a Deferred Timber Management Area.
5. There would be no destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat designated for species listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

Since the planning and design for this project was initiated prior to the 2008 ROD, it contains certain project design features that are not consistent with the management direction contained in the 2008 RMP, including:

- The juniper woodland treatments involved with this project are in the “Other East Side” land use allocation defined in the 1995 RMP. “Other East Side” as defined on page R-10 of the 1995 RMP included “all woodlands, commercial forest land outside matrix and Late Successional/District Designated Reserves, and non-forest lands”. The primary direction for these lands was to provide connectivity between biological communities, provide habitat for a variety of organisms, and provide for important ecological functions. Specific management direction included, “Manage range and riparian-wetland areas in the Gerber Block for a mosaic of native plant communities. This mosaic will allow for migration and dispersal of organisms between BLM-administered lands and adjacent U.S. Forest Service lands. Reintroduce fire as a natural disturbance factor through prescribed burning.”

The 2008 RMP now allocates most of the Gerber Block, including the lands within the proposed project area, to Administratively Withdrawn Areas. This land use allocation includes lands that have been withdrawn from the timber base and includes areas identified as not capable of growing timber on a sustainable basis, or non-forest areas such as grasslands and shrub-lands. The management direction for these lands under the 2008 RMP as it pertains to this project proposal is almost identical. This analysis and the proposed action are to manage the areas as outlined in the 1995 RMP.

- Riparian Reserves - The 1995 RMP included designation and management of riparian reserves. These reserves were designed to manage lands along streams and water bodies (designated with specific “buffer” widths around each water feature) to limit bank erosion, ensure an adequate and continuous supply of coarse woody debris to channels, and provide shade and microclimate protection. The 2008 RMP established Riparian Management Areas with similar objectives, although in the 2008 RMP the buffer widths are generally narrower. This proposed action maintains the wider buffer widths of Riparian Reserves as identified in the 1995 RMP.

The 2008 ROD anticipated these inconsistencies and projected they would not alter the analysis of effects in the associated final environmental impact statement. This type of inconsistency would result in less change to the current condition of the affected environment described in the 2008 EIS than if the project was consistent with the management direction in the 2008 RMP.

The implementation of this project will not have significant environmental effects beyond those already identified in either the 1995 or 2008 Final EIS/Proposed RMP. The proposed action does not constitute a major federal action having significant effects on the human environment; therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Note that ROD or RMP page numbers referenced in the environmental assessment and this Decision Record refer to the 1995 ROD/RMP.

DECISION

It is my decision to implement the Proposed Action in the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA with the mitigation measures listed below. As part of this action, the applicable Best Management Practices (BMPs) in Appendix D of the Klamath Falls Record of Decision and Resource Area Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP) and the applicable BMPs and Assumptions for Analysis in Appendix A of the EA that apply to actions outlined below will be implemented. The approved action will result in the removal of juniper material within the analysis area. Specifically, this decision will result in disposal of approximately 2,300 acres of juniper in the following sections, Willamette Meridian.

Table 1. Location of BLM administered lands within the analysis area.

Unit Name	Total Acres	Township	Range	Sections
FTZ 95/71	840	39S 39S 40S	13E 14E 14.5E	25,30,36 30 & 31 & 32, 6
Dog Hollow	852	40S 40S	14.5E 14E	5,6,7,8,17,18 1,12
Copeland	610	40S 40S	14E 14.5E	11,12,13,14,24 19
Totals	2302			

This project is designed to meet the purpose and need of the EA, reduce fuel loading and address an increased demand for commercial use of western juniper. Management actions planned under this Decision Record include:

- All three units will be available for utilization for commercial products including but not limited to chips, biomass, sawlogs, poles, or commercial firewood.
- Juniper would be yarded using standard logging equipment or other approved equipment capable of meeting the resource objectives to transport the cut juniper to existing permanent and/or temporary haul roads.
- Approximately three miles of temporary roads will be constructed to access piles and facilitate access for chip vans and chipping equipment. (See EA, Table 2).
- All new temporary roads will be obliterated upon completion of the yarding and hauling.
- Approximately 20 miles of existing haul roads will be improved including; grading, rocking, culvert cleaning, brushing, and water barring.
- Individual landing sizes would be limited to less than one acre and no more than 3% of the yarded area would be in landings.
- Public firewood cutting areas may be designated in areas that are not burned or utilized for other purposes. Some areas may need to have the limbs re-piled by hand or with machines after removal of the firewood. Re-piling of residual slash will be assessed upon removal of the firewood by the public.

- Residual landing material and piles in inaccessible areas would be burned after utilization operations are complete.

Monitoring

The KFRA ROD/RMP (Appendix K) requires that at least twenty percent of the timber sales, silviculture projects, or other ground disturbing activities be monitored annually. The KFRA has issued an Annual Program Summary (APS) and Monitoring Report on a yearly basis since the signing of the Resource Management Plan in 1995. The Annual Program Summary documents the results of annual timber sale monitoring as well as on-going monitoring of other resources. See Page 73-130 of the 2008 Annual Program Summary and Monitoring Report. Table 19-11 on page 39, lists all of the biomass removal that has been sold to date under the KFRA Resource Management Plan.

The disturbed areas that are seeded with native grasses will be monitored annually for the first two years following treatment to determine the seeding success. Areas where the grass seeding failed, will be re-seeded a minimum of one additional time.

Mitigation

The applicable Best Management Practices (BMPs) described in Appendix A of the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA and the BMPs in Appendix D of the 1995 KFRA ROD/RMP that pertain to timber harvesting and the affected resources will be implemented. The following additional mitigation measures were deemed necessary.

- Full suspension of the material will be required to main skid trails, which will be approximately two hundred (200) feet apart. Partial suspension (one end) will be allowed on main skid trails leading to landings. This measure is meant to mitigate the effects of yarding on soil and native vegetative resources and to mitigate the spread of noxious weeds.
- Concentrated patches of noxious weeds, in particular medusahead, will be identified (flagged) and avoided during all treatment operations, with emphasis on yarding operations. These no treatment sub-unit designations will be made in the field before operations commence by appropriate members of the ID team (range, botany, and forestry will be included as needed).
- Public firewood gathering will be limited to a small number of designated areas outside of concentrated patches of medusahead and other noxious weed areas. This should limit potential spread of noxious weeds via vehicles.
- The Copeland and Round Valley pastures will be rested from livestock grazing for two years following juniper removal to allow the newly seeded areas to become well established. This will be done through the normal rotation schedule for each allotment and will not result in decreased AUMs.
- All pile burning will occur when soils are wet or frozen. This will minimize the damage to soil organic matter from the concentrated heat of the piles.
- Waterbars and/or spreading of thin layer of slash will be required in areas identified by the hydrologist or soil scientist to reduce erosion potential and sediment transport.

Table 1 – Summary of treatments for Selected Alternative

Treatment	Selected Action
Proposed Action	Mechanically Yard – Full Suspension to main Skid Trails then One End Suspension on Main Skid Trails to the Landings.
Yarding (Acres)	2,000 - 2,300 acres
Burning (Acres)	100 - 500 acres
*Firewood Cutting (Where Accessible)	* Up to 500 acres
Estimated Miles of Temporary Road Construction	Up to 3.0 Miles
Planting (Acres)	Up to 1,000 acres
Seeding (Acres)	Up to 2,300 acres
Fence Construction / Repair	Up to 3.0 Miles
Riparian Reserves and Dry Meadows	Full suspension only

* Firewood cutting would be allowed in designated areas only.

Resources Not Present

The following resources are not present within the proposed Juniper Disposal EA Area: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs); prime or unique farmlands, mining claims, paleontological resources, roadless areas, wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, floodplains, wetlands, solid or hazardous waste, and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Environmental Consequences

Implementation of the proposed action is consistent with the effects analyzed for the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA and the KFRA RMP EIS. The project as designed, along with BMPs from the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA and the BMPs from the 1995 KFRA ROD/RMP will minimize the effects to the affected resources and result in no effects that are greater than those described in the EA and the KFRA RMP EIS.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The decision to implement the Proposed Action is based on the following rationale:

- The Proposed Action meets the Purpose and Need for Action identified in the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA (page 7) and furthers the intent established in the RMP to:
 - ✓ Reduce fuel loadings.
 - ✓ Address an increased public demand for western juniper for commercial use and firewood.
 - ✓ Reduces the overall smoke emissions.

Alternative 1, Utilize Juniper - Mechanically Yard - Full Suspension (EA page 11) is partially adopted as a mitigation measure to the proposed alternative. Material is required to be fully suspended to the main skid trail to reduce damage to vegetative and soil resources. Once at the main skid trails, material may be partially suspended for transportation to landings. Within sensitive areas (riparian reserve, weed areas, etc) full suspension is still required. Requiring full suspension

yarding to the main skid trails is expected to reduce the impacts to the desirable rangeland understory vegetation and result in less overall mineral soil exposure compared to one-end suspension yarding. The KFRA has been testing and monitoring an array of juniper removal/yarding techniques including both one-end and full suspension yarding of western juniper since 2001. We first tested full suspension yarding to the main skid trails in 2004. On-site observations indicated generally less vegetation disturbance of the desirable native shrubs, grasses, and forbs along with less mineral soil exposure. In addition, full-suspension yarding should result in less chance to spread of noxious weeds if the juniper is not dragged through the area. There is an additional cost per acre between full and one-end suspension which averages \$10-\$15/acre. In regards to compaction, there would likely be minimal to no difference in compaction between one-end and full suspension yarding because the yarding equipment would still be covering the same ground using either suspension technique.

Personal firewood gathering under the proposed action is being reduced from 2300 acres to approximately 500 acres due to the incidence of noxious weeds in the project areas. Areas for personal use firewood gathering will be placed in areas with little to no chance of the spread of weeds and invasive plants via vehicles used to gather firewood. Restricting personnel use firewood to specific areas is being implemented to reduce risk of spreading noxious weeds.

Alternative 2, the Burn Only Alternative, consists primarily of disposing of pre-cut juniper piles by burning them. This alternative would under utilize available resources and increase the overall smoke emissions in the area. The BLM is encouraging the field offices (WO IM 2005-192) to “Increase biomass offered to 50% of mechanical fuels projects by 2008”. No timber/biomass resources would be provided to support local economies as required in the KFRA/RMP. There will be some areas that access or utilization is not feasible. Cut and piled juniper will be burned in those areas.

The No Action Alternative would leave excess fuels on the ground. In addition, the economic demand for the material would not be met. A certain percentage of the natural vegetation beneath the piles would be shaded out, interfering with revegetation efforts.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A “No Effect” determination has been made by the BLM for all Federally Listed species for the proposed actions. There are currently no listed species or Designated Critical Habitat present and no federally listed species would be affected by the proposed action.

This project has been presented to and discussed with Perry Chocktoot, Cultural and Heritage Director of The Klamath Tribes during regular bi-monthly consultation meetings in April 2008, as well as further discussions with both Perry Chocktoot and Les Anderson in September, October, and the November bi-monthly meetings.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The KFRA initiated public scoping on this project on March 25, 2008. The scoping letter was mailed to approximately one hundred and eighty-five (185) individuals and groups on the KFRA EA mailing list. That letter explained the project proposal and asked the general public for comments. The resource area received two responses.

1. One respondent stated that they supported the utilization and thinning of encroaching juniper but not old growth native juniper stands.
2. The other respondent had concerns regarding:
 - The initial up-front analysis using only Categorical Exclusions may have been inadequate. Categorical Exclusion do not adequately address connected actions and did not initially assess removal (utilization) of the juniper.
 - A Cumulative Impacts analysis of the proposed action along with other actions like; livestock grazing and road management need to be disclosed.
 - The EA needs to analyze the impacts of road use and management including the impact of spreading invasive weeds.
 - Special Status species analysis.
 - A full range of alternatives be analyzed.

The KFRA incorporated both internal and the public concerns and issues into their development of the Juniper Disposal 2008 EA. On March 2, 2009 a notice of availability for the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA was mailed to the KFRA EA mailing list (approximately one hundred forty-eight notices) and published in the Herald and News (Klamath Falls, Oregon Newspaper). The notice requested review and comments on the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA. That letter explained the project proposal and asked the general public for comments. One comment letter was received during the formal thirty (30) day public EA comment period.

Following are responses to relevant issues raised in the initial public scoping period and during the EA comment period.

Roads Comments: *The EA must analyze the impacts of road use and management associated with this proposal. We are opposed to building roads for no good reason. The EA failed to disclose the full adverse impacts of road building in terms of soil degradation, water pollution, hydrological alternation, spreading weeds, disturbing wildlife, degrading habitat, interfering with recreation, fire ignition risks, scenic quality, and soil carbon storage. Roads are not a recommended part of our restoration efforts because they have no analog in the natural range of variability and their impacts cannot be fully mitigated.*

Response:

The EA proposes up to three miles of temporary road construction in the three different units (See page 11 & Table 2). As stated on pages 11, 50 and 51, all temporary roads would be obliterated upon completion, hence there would be no increase in road densities and no new permanent roads would be constructed. Appendix A lists the assumptions and the Best Management Practices (BMPs) that would be applied where temporary roads are built. In addition, Appendix D of the KFRA 1995 (Pages D1-D46) describe additional BMPs that are designed to achieve the objectives of maintaining or improving water quality and soil productivity and the protection of riparian-wetland areas.

The EA analyzes the impacts and provides mitigation of the proposed temporary roads to rangeland vegetation (Page 19), hydrology and water quality (Page 38), soils (Pages 44, 46-49), road management (Pages 50-52), Cultural Sites (Page 56), Noxious Weeds (Pages 57 & 58), and Fire Management (Page 62). Some of the mitigation measures recommended in the EA include:

- Identifying the noxious weed areas (medusa head) prior to yarding
- Avoid concentrations of noxious weed areas
- Seeding disturbed areas and burn piles with native seed

- Resting the Copeland and Round Valley pastures from livestock grazing one to two years following treatments
- Obliterating any new roads
- Limit skidding to when soils are dry
- Minimize landing size to less than one acre
- Renovate roads at key locations to reduce runoff
- Avoid yarding on slopes >35%
- Covering some disturbed areas with juniper litter
- Roads pioneered by firewood cutters will be obliterated blocked, seeded, and waterbarred.
- Cultural sites will be flagged and avoided
- Pressure washing and cleaning equipment prior to operations

The EA has analyzed the impacts for the proposed temporary roads.

Cumulative Impacts Comments: *The EA fails to disclose the full cumulative impacts of juniper cutting and juniper removal. We are opposed to segmented NEPA analysis because it hides the full ecological impacts of this juniper project in two separate documents.*

Response:

The cumulative effects of juniper cutting were analyzed under the NEPA documents that covered each juniper treatment (page 68). The cumulative effects analysis in this EA analyzes both the previously analyzed cutting and the currently proposed utilization (Pages 39, 49 and 60.)

Loss of On-Site Nutrients From Juniper Removal Comments: *The EA fails to disclose the impacts from the potential loss of on-site nutrients that are captured and stored in the juniper trees and those nutrients should not be exported from these sites that are already nutrient deprived. Juniper plays a role in the nutrient cycle by capturing, storing, and, when they die, releasing nutrients.*

Response:

The EA addresses soil nutrient levels in the soil description (Page 40) as “deep, high organic matter, nutrient-enriched, surface soil, typically between 60-80 cm thick”. The EA examines the potential loss of soil organic matter for each alternative in Pages 45-49. Under the proposed action, decreases in soil productivity affecting vegetation growth are only short term and should not last more than five years (Page 46). It has been reported that, the removal of juniper reduces competition for soil N (and presumably other nutrients) and water which permits the understory to increase after juniper removal whether by cutting or fire (Bates et. al. 2007).

Juniper’s Historic Range/Distribution/Expansion And The Impact To That Range From Humans and Potential Climate Changes: *Juniper is a native species and its abundance likely fluctuated with climate variation and disturbance patterns that are in turn affected by humans, both pre-historic and modern. The warming climate and CO2 enriched atmosphere might be driving much of the juniper expansion we are seeing and if so this will continue for hundreds of years in spite of our best efforts.*

Response:

The 2008 Juniper EA analyzes yarding of juniper that has already been cut and piled. No additional juniper will be cut under this DR.

While it is not speculative that some change in climate conditions will occur in the future, it is not possible to reasonably foresee the specific nature or magnitude of the changes. This uncertainty

within the scientific community regarding global warming and climate change was noted in the 1994 FEIS (See Page 4-7 and 4-8).

Where Should Juniper Projects Be Targeted: *Maybe future juniper treatments should be carefully targeted to improve known occupied sage grouse habitat but not be implemented indiscriminately.*

Response:

Juniper management units were selected to provide a variety of resource benefits, including reducing hazardous fuels and improving rangeland habitat, particularly historically occupied sage grouse habitat. There is no currently occupied sage grouse habitat within the Klamath Falls Resource Area.

Specific management direction from the 1995 RMP for these projects areas includes, “*Manage range and riparian-wetland areas in the Gerber Block for a mosaic of native plant communities. This mosaic will allow for migration and dispersal of organisms between BLM-administered lands and adjacent U.S. Forest Service lands. Reintroduce fire as a natural disturbance factor through prescribed burning.*” By harvesting patches of encroaching juniper a mosaic is created that will meet wildlife and fuel objectives.

Literature Cited

Bates, J.D., R.F. Miller and T. Svejcar, 2007a. Long-Term Vegetation Dynamics in a Cut Western Juniper Woodland. *Western North American Naturalist* 67(4), 549-561.

Bates, J.D., T.S. Svejcar, and R.F. Miller, 2007b. Litter decomposition in cut and uncut western juniper woodlands. *Journal of Arid Environments* 70, 222-236.

Bates, Jon. 2007. Western Juniper Control Studies: EOARC Research Report. Eastern Oregon Agricultural Research Center; USDA-Agricultural Research Service, Burns, OR.

Bovey, R. W., D. Le Tourneau, and L.C. Erickson. 1961. The chemical composition of medusahead and downy brome. *Weeds* 9:307-311.

Miller, R.F., R.J. Tausch, and W. Waichler. 1999a. Old-growth juniper and piñon woodlands. Pages 375-384. In S.B. Monsen, R. Stevens, R.J. Tausch, and R.F. Miller (compilers). *Proceedings: Ecology and management of Piñon-juniper communities within the interior west*. USDA Forest Service Proceedings RMRS-P-9.

Miller, R.F., J.D. Bates, T.J. Svejcar, F.B. Pierson, and L.E. Eddleman, 2005. *Biology Ecology and Management of Western Juniper (Juniperus occidentalis)*. Technical Bulletin 152, OSU Agricultural Research Station.

CONCLUSION

A. Consideration of Public Comments

I have reviewed the public comments summarized in the Public Involvement section of this decision record. I have discussed them with the interdisciplinary team of specialists on my staff and I believe the EA and this decision record contain sufficient site specific information to implement the proposed action.

The comments received have been considered in reaching this decision but do not provide any substantially new information or new analysis, nor do they identify substantial new data gaps that would indicate additional analysis is needed. Finally, the comments do not identify any significant new data which would alter the effects described in the EA or in the RMP EIS. I am confident that

the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA plus the supplemental information contained in this Decision Record represents a thorough analysis of impacts to affected habitats and species, in light of the more comprehensive analysis done in the Klamath Falls Resource Area RMP to which the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA is tiered.

B. Plan Consistency

Based on the information in the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA and in the record, I conclude that this action is consistent with the Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan. The action will help to move this portion of the landscape towards the desired future conditions considered in development of the RMP. The actions will comply with the *Endangered Species Act*, the *Native American Religious Freedom Act*, cultural resource management laws and regulations, and Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice). This decision will not have any adverse effects to energy development, production, supply and/or distribution (per Executive Order 13212).

C. Finding of No Significant Impact

No significant effects were identified. No effects beyond those anticipated in the KFRA RMP EIS would occur. I concur with the accompanying Finding of No Significant Impact for the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA.

D. Summary

In consideration of public comments, the consistency with the RMP and the finding that there would not be any significant impacts, this decision will allow for activities related to the proposed action of the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA.

ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES

This decision is a forest management decision. Administrative remedies are available to persons who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Administrative recourse is available in accordance with BLM regulations and must follow the procedures and requirements described in 43 CFR § 5003.

To protest a forest management decision, a person must submit a written and signed protest to the Klamath Falls Field Manager, 2795 Anderson Avenue, Building 25, Klamath Falls, OR 97603-7891 by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) not more than 15 days after publication of the Notice of Decision in the Klamath Falls Herald and News newspaper. The protest must clearly and concisely state which portion or element of the decision is being protested and why it is believed to be in error, as well as cite applicable regulations. Faxed or emailed protests will not be considered. If no protest is received by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) within 15 days after publication of the Notice of Decision, the decision will become final. If a timely protest is received, the decision will be reconsidered in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available, and a final decision will be issued in accordance with 43 CFR § 5003.3.

For additional information contact Don Hoffheins, Environmental Planner (541-885-4105) or Mike Bechdolt, Assistant Field Manager (541-885-4118).

/s/ Donald J. Holmstrom

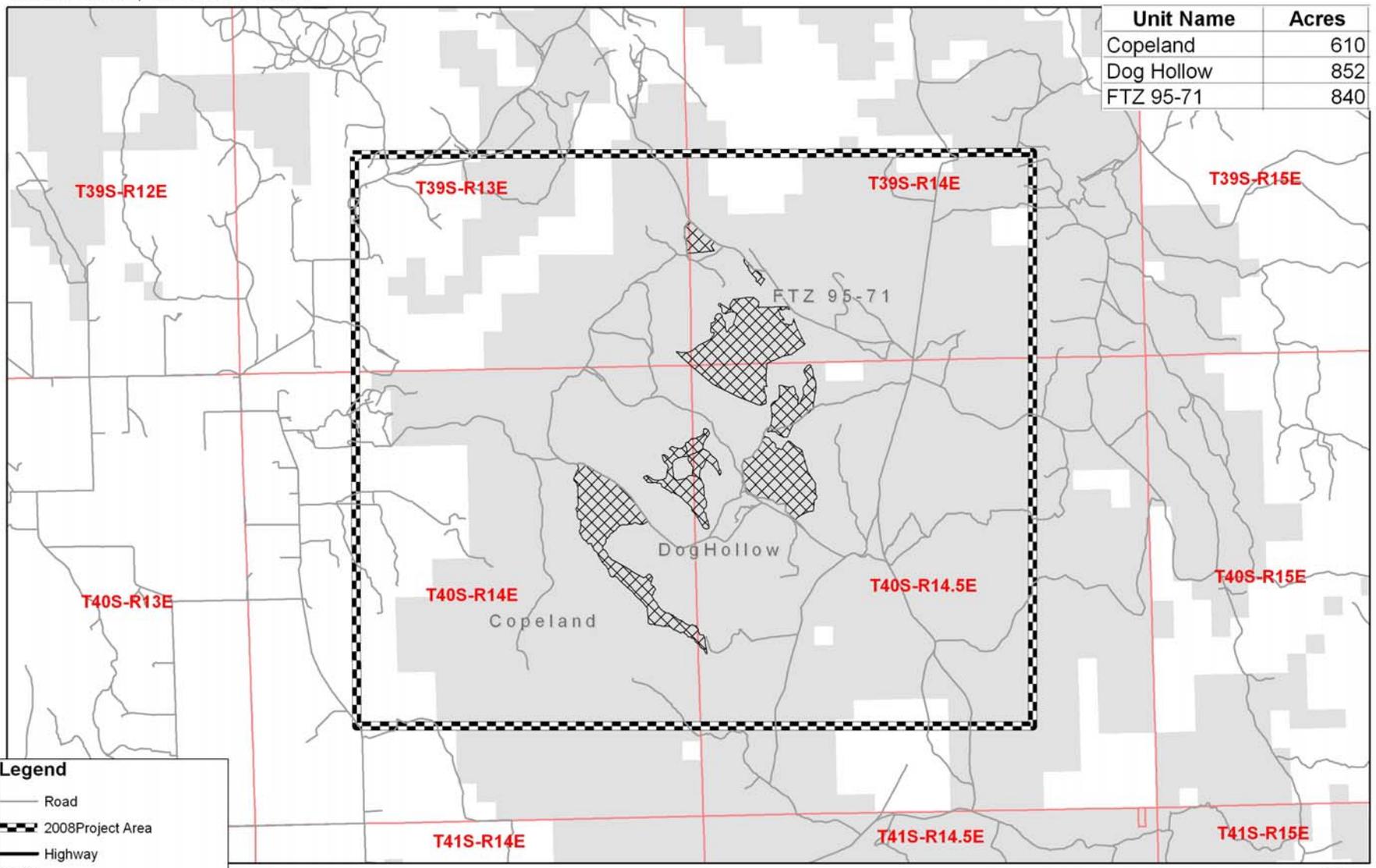
Donald J. Holmstrom, Manager
Klamath Falls Resource Area
Lakeview District, Bureau of Land Management

6/11/2009

Date

2008 Juniper Disposal EA
 Willamette Meridian
 T.39S.-T.40S., R.13E.-R.14.5E.

Unit Name	Acres
Copeland	610
Dog Hollow	852
FTZ 95-71	840



Legend

- Road
- 2008 Project Area
- Highway
- Project Units
- KFRA Township Range Lines
- BLM



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**

Klamath Falls Resource Area

Finding of No Significant Impact

2008 Juniper Disposal Environmental Assessment

(#EA-OR 014-08-06)

Background:

The Klamath Falls Resource Area (KFRA), Lakeview District, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), has completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) to analyze the impacts of different alternatives to dispose of 2,300 acres of cut and piled juniper. The actions considered include burning, ground based yarding the material using either one-end or full suspension and then removing and utilizing the material, or leaving it lay. The proposed action will contribute to the reduction of fuel hazards generated from the recent juniper cutting and piling as well as provide material for commercial uses. The western juniper piles are located on rangelands and juniper woodlands located in the KFRA and were cut to improve overall rangeland conditions and to reduce the effects from encroaching western juniper on native rangeland vegetation. The proposed project area is located east of Klamath Falls and west of Lakeview within the Klamath Falls Resource Area.

The proposed action is to mechanically yard western juniper using one-end suspension and then utilize it for biomass or other value added wood products. In riparian reserves and meadows, juniper would only be removed using full suspension logging. Inaccessible piles and residual landing piles will be burned after removal of material. Approximately three miles of temporary roads would be built and obliterated after use to facilitate removal. Approximately 20 miles of existing haul roads will be improved. The overall objective is to restore native rangeland vegetation, reduce smoke emissions and improve air quality, and to provide a raw material to be utilized for biomass and other value added wood products while at the same time contributing to local employment.

The issues addressed in the EA concern potential impacts to rangeland, soils, water quality, air quality, and other resources as they affect the ecosystem in the proposed project area. The design features of the Proposed Action and alternatives are analyzed in this EA.

Analysis of Potential Effects:

The proposed action and alternatives including “no action” were analyzed for significant effects as per the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations - 40 CFR § 1508.27. The following criteria listed under 40 CFR § 1508.27(b) were considered and found to be not applicable to this action: significant beneficial or adverse effects; significant effects on public health or safety; effects on the quality of the human environment that are likely to be highly controversial; anticipated cumulatively significant impacts; highly uncertain or unknown risks; and precedents for future actions with significant effects.

The following unique characteristics (Critical Elements of the Human Environment), listed in 40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(3), are not present and will not be affected: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs); prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; wilderness; solid or hazardous waste; and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

In regard to 40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(8), no adverse impacts are expected to cultural, scientific, or historical resources. The proposed area has been surveyed for cultural resources using BLM Class III survey methods. Surveys for cultural resources were conducted and known sites will be avoided. There are no sites, structures or objects listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

There will be no significant impacts to any special status species or habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act [40 CFR § 1508.27 (b)(9)]. Surveys of the proposed treatment area were conducted for Threatened and Endangered species and special status species. Refer to the analysis for a discussion of special status species and habitat. Implementation of the mitigation measures described in the Decision Record as part of the proposed action would be sufficient to avoid significant impacts to potential habitat for special status species.

As per 40 CFR § 1508.27(b)(10), this action conforms with all applicable Federal, State, and local laws and regulations.

The action is consistent with Executive Order 12898 which addresses Environmental Justice. No potential impacts to low-income or minority populations have been identified internally by the BLM or externally through public notification and involvement. Consultation with local tribal governments has not identified any unique or special resources providing religious, employment, subsistence or recreation opportunities. Implementation of the actions would provide some employment opportunities that would involve local contractors who engage in similar types of work throughout Klamath County and the state of Oregon.

Pursuant to Executive Order 13212, the BLM must consider effects of this decision on National Energy Policy. There will be no known adverse effect on National Energy Policy. Within the project area there are no known energy resources with commercial potential and energy producing or processing facilities.

Plan Conformance:

The 2008 Klamath Falls Resource Management Plan (2008 RMP) provides direction for managing lands on the Bureau of Land Management, Lakeview District. At the time that the planning and analysis of these juniper treatments was being completed, management of these BLM lands was based on direction in the 1995 Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management Plan (1995 RMP). On December 30, 2008 the Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (2008 ROD) was signed for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Revision of the Resource Management Plans of the Western Oregon Bureau of Land Management (October, 2008) including the Klamath Falls Resource Area.

Revision of a resource management plan necessarily involves a transition from the application of direction in the old resource management plan to the application of the new resource management plan. A transition period from the old resource management plan to the new resource management plan avoids disruption of the management of BLM-administered lands and allows the BLM to utilize work already begun on the planning and analysis of projects. Since the planning and design for this project was initiated prior to the 2008 ROD, the environmental assessment contains certain elements that are not exactly the same as the management direction contained in the 2008 RMP, but are very similar.

The aspects of this project that are based on the 1995 RMP but are different from the 2008 RMP include:

- The juniper woodland treatments involved with this project are in the “Other East Side” land use allocation defined in the 1995 RMP. “Other East Side” lands are defined on page R-10 of the 1995 RMP and include “all woodlands, commercial forest land outside matrix and Late Successional/District Designated Reserves, and non-forest lands”. The primary direction for these lands was to provide connectivity between biological communities, provide habitat for a variety of organisms, and provide for important ecological functions. Specific management direction included, “Manage range and riparian-wetland areas in the Gerber Block for a mosaic of native plant communities. This mosaic will allow for migration and dispersal of organisms between BLM-administered lands and adjacent U.S. Forest Service lands. Reintroduce fire as a natural disturbance factor through prescribed burning.”

The 2008 RMP now allocates most of the Gerber Block including the lands with the proposed project area to Administratively Withdrawn Areas. This land use allocation includes lands that have been withdrawn from the timber base and include areas identified as not capable of growing timber on a sustainable basis, or non-forest areas such as grasslands and shrub-lands. The management direction for these lands under the 2008 RMP as it pertains to this project proposal is almost identical. This analysis of the proposed action and alternatives is therefore based on direction as outlined in the 1995 RMP.

- Riparian Reserves - The 1995 RMP included designation and management of riparian reserves. These reserves were designed to manage lands along streams and water bodies (designated with specific “buffer” widths around each water feature) to limit bank erosion, ensure an adequate and continuous supply of coarse woody debris to channels, and provide shade and microclimate protection. The 2008 RMP established Riparian Management Areas with similar objectives, although the 2008 RMP the buffer widths are generally narrower. This proposed action maintains the wider buffer widths of Riparian Reserves as identified in the 1995 RMP.

Determination:

The anticipated environmental effects contained in this EA are based on research, professional judgement, and experience of the Interdisciplinary (ID) team and Klamath Falls Resource Area staff. Based on the information within the Environmental Assessment, it is my determination that none of the alternatives analyzed constitute a significant impact affecting the quality of the human environment greater than those addressed in the:

- Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Revision of the Resource Management Plans of the Western Oregon Bureau of Land Management (October, 2008) including the Klamath Falls Resource Area.
- Klamath Falls Resource Area Integrated Weed Control Plan EA (1993).
- Final Environmental Impact Statement, Vegetation Treatments on BLM Lands in Thirteen Western States (1991).
- Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project and the Eastside Draft Environmental Impact Statement (ICBEMP, May 1997).

Despite that there are minor differences in management direction from the 1995 RMP, the 2008 ROD anticipated these differences and projected they would not alter the analysis of effects at the scale of the associated final environmental impact statement. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement, or a supplement to the existing RMP or Environmental Impact Statement, is not necessary and will not be prepared.

/s/ Donald J. Holmstrom
 Donald Holmstrom
 Manager, Klamath Falls Resource Area

6/11/2009
 Date