



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Klamath Falls Resource Area
2795 Anderson Avenue, Building 25
Klamath Falls, Oregon 97603-7891
Phone: (541) 883-6916 | Fax: (541) 884-2097

IN REPLY REFER TO
5400 (014)

DATE:
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DECISION RECORD FOR 2009 Juniper Disposal EA #DOI-BLM-OR-L040-2009-0008-EA

INTRODUCTION

The effects of the disposing of western juniper by; 1) burning, 2) yarding and removing, or 3) leaving lay are analyzed in the 2009 Juniper Disposal Environmental Assessment (EA) # OR-L040-2009-0008-EA. The 2009 Juniper Disposal EA analyzed approximately 3,200 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 2009 Juniper Disposal EA.

The Klamath Falls Resource Area (KFRA) interdisciplinary team analyzed the impacts of the 2009 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 1995 KFRA Resource Management Plan (RMP). The alternatives were designed to represent typical methods that BLM uses to dispose of juniper, or leave it on site (No Action). Each unit was analyzed independently for treatment methods in each alternative in the 2009 Juniper Disposal EA with the expectation that a single treatment would not be appropriate for all units because of differing conditions.

This decision is in conformance with the Klamath Falls Resource Area 1995 Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (1995 ROD/RMP). The implementation of this project will not have significant environmental effects beyond those already identified in the 1995 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, unless otherwise noted.

DECISION

It is my decision to implement a combination of actions as analyzed under Alternatives One and Two, and the No Action Alternative, with the mitigation measures listed below. No single alternative effectively meets the purpose and need and provides resource protection as specified in the RMP. The approved action will result in the removal of some juniper material, burning of some juniper material, and no treatment of some juniper material within the analysis area. This decision will result in disposal of previously cut and piled juniper on approximately 3,200 acres in the following sections, Willamette Meridian.

Table 1 – Location of BLM-administered Lands within the Analysis Area

Unit Name	Acres	Township	Range	Section
FTZ 110	141	T39S	R14E	14,15,22,23
Smith Reservoir	786	T40S T40S	R12E R13E	12 &13 7, 8, 17, 18
Pine Creek	990	T40S	R14E	3,4,10,11,14,15,22,23
Schnipps	89	T39S	R13E	24 & 25
North Willow Valley Sage	970	T41S T41S	R14E R14.5E	12 5,6,7,8,17,18
Pitchlog	104	T39S T39S	R14E R15E	22,23,24,25 31
Miller Creek	71	T39S	R13E	12,13,14,23,26
Potholes	30	T39S	R13E	2,11
TOTAL	3,181			

Specific treatments for each unit are identified in Table 2, below. Based on site specific information of conditions or potential effects, some portions of a unit will be treated differently than other parts of the unit. This decision will eliminate most of the existing juniper piles through a combination of pile burning and full-suspension yarding. The remaining piles will be left on site. Note that although the Proposed Action for each of the units in the 2009 Juniper Disposal EA was to yard the juniper using one-end suspension, based on resource conditions and potential impacts, that action is not selected for any unit. 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.

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 approved with this Decision include:

- Mechanically yard approximately 1,300 acres of western juniper currently lying on the ground or in piles, fully suspending trees during yarding. See summary of treatments for each unit listed in Table 2.
- Juniper would be yarded using standard logging equipment such as rubber tired grapple skidder, front-end loader, or rubber tired forwarder, to transport the cut and piled wood to landings located next to permanent or temporary haul roads.
- Construct approximately three miles of temporary roads to access piles and facilitate access for chip vans and chipping equipment. The decision to not utilize the juniper piles in the North Willow Valley Sage unit reduces the estimated mileage of temporary roads to be built by approximately two miles from the figure of five miles proposed in the EA.
- Obliterate and seed/plant all new temporary roads upon completion of the yarding and hauling.
- Improve and maintain approximately 20 miles of existing haul roads including such as grading, rocking, culvert cleaning or replacement, brushing, and water barring.
- Seed and/or plant with native vegetation disturbed areas (primarily obliterated roads, skid trails, landings, and burn pile scars) and where native plants occur at low densities.

- Some planted vegetation would also be fitted with protective plastic mesh tubes to protect the young plants from being browsed. (Approximately 5-15% of the yarded areas would be planted and tubed.)
- Residual piled material would be burned following completion of utilization activities. This would include un-yarded piles and landing material. Piles in areas that have been determined to be inaccessible or too weed infested to operate in will be burned.
- Individual landing sizes would be limited to less than one acre and no more than 3% of the yarded area would be in landings.
- Firewood would be allowed in units approved for utilization using standard pickup trucks subject to normal BLM seasonal restrictions on firewood cutting for wet soil conditions.

Table 2 – Decision of Juniper Treatment by Unit

Unit Name	Approximate Acres	Issues	Decision
FTZ 110	141	Existing piles are no longer feasible for pile burning.	Utilize the juniper in this unit. Leave the juniper where the piles are inaccessible.
Smith Reservoir	786	Invasive and noxious weeds and access to portions of the unit	Utilize approximately 600 acres of material. Burn the juniper on approximately 200 acres where the piles are inaccessible (southeast area), are in concentrated weed infested areas. Repile and burn residual piles that are left as part of the yarding and processing operations
Pine Creek	990	Invasive and noxious weeds	Utilize approximately 500 acres of juniper in non-weed infested areas. Burn the juniper on approximately 500 acres where the piles are inaccessible, are in concentrated weed infested areas. Repile and burn residual piles that are left as part of the yarding and processing operations. Specific acreage is approximate for this unit. Additional spring weed surveys will be completed to locate weed infested areas that would be avoided.
Schnipps	89	Existing piles may no longer be feasible for burning.	Utilize the juniper in this unit. Burn piles in inaccessible areas. Repile and burn residual material that is left as part of the yarding and processing operations. If burning cannot be accomplished, the juniper will remain on site. Approximately 10 acres of juniper will be yarded for personal use firewood.
North Willow Valley Sage	970	Invasive and noxious weeds	Burn the juniper piles in this unit.
Pitchlog	104	Riparian Reserve, T&E species habitat	Burn the juniper piles in this unit.
Miller Creek	71	Riparian Reserve, ACEC, T&E species habitat	Burn the juniper piles in this unit.
Potholes	30	Riparian Reserve, Potential damage by personal use firewood cutters, Recreational trail	Utilize the juniper boles in this unit. The boles will be removed for firewood using full suspension techniques such as a standard pickup truck and trailer. All handpiles would be burned.
TOTAL	3,181		

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 monitoring. See Page 75-118 of the 2009 Annual Program Summary and Monitoring Report.

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

Mitigation Measures

The applicable Best Management Practices (BMPs) described in Appendix A of the 2009 Juniper Disposal EA and the BMPs in Appendix D of the 1995 KFRA ROD/RMP that pertain to equipment used for timber harvesting and the affected resources will be implemented. The following additional mitigation measures were deemed necessary.

- Concentrated patches of noxious weeds, in particular medusahead, will be identified (flagged) and avoided during yarding operations. These no yarding sub-unit designations will be made in the field before operations commence by appropriately trained BLM staff. 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.
- Pile burning will occur only when the soil meets the moist to wet criteria as described in Table A.1 of the EA. This will minimize the damage to soil organic matter from the concentrated heat of the piles.
- Seeding, planting, construction of waterbars and/or spreading of thin layer of slash are practices that will be required on disturbed areas to reduce erosion potential and sediment transport.
- If monitoring shows that management activities result in high surface disturbance and vegetative response does not meet rangeland health standards then Horton and Smith Allotments will be rested for at least one season.

Resources Not Present

The following resources are not present within the proposed Juniper Disposal EA Area: 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 2009 Juniper Disposal EA and the KFRA RMP EIS. The project as designed, along with BMPs from the 2009 Juniper Disposal EA and the BMPs from the 1995 KFRA ROD/RMP will minimize the environmental consequences to the affected resources and result in no effects that are greater than those described in the EA and the KFRA 1995 RMP EIS.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION

The decision is based on the following rationale:

After a thorough review of the EA and numerous discussions with the interdisciplinary team, I have determined the actions in this decision 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.

The decision to implement a mixture of actions as analyzed under Alternatives One and Two and the No Action Alternative takes into consideration site specific analysis of the units.

The decision meets the Purpose and Need for Action identified in the 2009 Juniper Disposal EA (page 8) and furthers the intent established in the RMP to:

- Reduce fuel loadings. (RMP page 76)
- Address an increased public and industrial demand for western juniper for manufacturing, commercial use and firewood. (RMP page 56)
- Address Ecological and Socio-Economic Impacts (RMP, pgs 26, 27, 30 73).

Full Suspension Yarding

For the units I have chosen to be yarded, the treatment method in Alternative 1, requiring that yarded material be fully suspended to reduce damage to vegetative and soil resources will be used. Requiring full suspension yarding 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. This action would have lower potential impacts than the Proposed Action, although the differences would be difficult to quantify.

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. Full suspension yarding to the main skid trails was first tested 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, although portions of units are avoided where weeds are concentrated, full-suspension yarding should result in less chance to spread of noxious weeds because the juniper is not dragged through the area as it is in one-end-suspension-only yarding. There is an additional financial cost per acre with full suspension compared and one-end suspension yarding. I have determined that the ecological benefits of fully suspending the yarded material justify the additional cost. In regards to compaction, there would likely be minimal to no measurable 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.

Firewood

Personal firewood gathering will be limited to designated areas due to the incidence of noxious weeds in the project areas. Restricting personnel use firewood to designated cutting areas is being implemented to reduce risk of spreading noxious weeds. Commercial firewood gathering areas would be identified in the utilization units to better control of removal operations.

Pile Burning

I have decided to implement this action for portions of the project area as described in Table 2 and shown on the attached map. This combination of burning full and/or partial units is being done in order to remove excessive fuels while minimizing ecological impacts. Areas selected for application of this treatment include weed infested areas, areas with difficult access, and ecologically sensitive

areas such as riparian areas. In areas that are yarded, residual material may be replied and the landing piles burned.

I have determined that the ecological benefits of not yarding in weed concentration areas, areas with difficult access, and sensitive riparian areas outweighs the impacts of additional smoke and any economic detriment that might occur due to the material not being available for utilization.

No Yarding or Pile Burning

This action is only selected to be implemented in portions of FTZ 110 and Schnipps units where none of the other actions are appropriate. This is typically where the juniper is too old to burn in the winter and is not accessible for utilization.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Overall, the selected action is anticipated to have long-term beneficial effects to proposed critical habitat for the endangered shortnose sucker and is likely to improve all the Primary Constituent Elements (water, physical habitat, and biological environment) for the sucker. This project will benefit habitat conditions for the sucker by restoring geomorphic and hydrologic function to improve the quality and amount of riparian and aquatic resources. Therefore, a determination of “May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect” was made by the BLM for the Proposed Critical Habitat Unit #6 for the shortnose sucker (*Chasmistes brevirostris*) within the units described above.

Regarding aquatic threatened or endangered species, in October 2009, BLM corresponded with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) regarding this project. During the correspondence, both agencies agreed that this project meets criteria and is designed to meet Project Design Criteria for coverage under the Biological Opinion for Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management aquatic habitat restoration activities (ARBO). The Pre-Project Notification Form for Activities Conducted Under the Aquatic Restoration Programmatic Biological Opinion was sent to the Service on January 27, 2010. The project is applicable to category 13 (Riparian Vegetation Treatment (controlled burning) (see Biological Opinion and Letter of Concurrence, USDA Forest Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management and the Coquille Indian Tribe for Programmatic Aquatic Habitat Restoration Activities in Oregon and Washington That Affect ESA-listed Fish, Wildlife and Plant Species and their Critical Habitats, US Fish and Wildlife Service, June 14, 2007). Use of this Biological Opinion requires that certain general and project category specific Conservation Measures (CMs) and Project Design Criteria (PDC) will be followed. These include spill containment and contingency plans, site preparation and restoration measures (see EA, Appendix D).

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 in 2008.

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 Exclusions 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 issues and concerns raised were considered in formulation of alternatives (Chapter 2), the Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences sections and development of mitigation measures (Chapter 3), and discussed in Appendix F of the EA.

On December 18, 2009 a notice of availability for the 2009 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 2009 Juniper Disposal EA. That letter explained the project proposal and asked the general public for comments. Two comment letters were received during the formal thirty (30) day public EA comment period.

Following are responses to relevant issues raised during the EA comment period.

Legal Notice: *The legal notice mistakenly refers to the 2008 Juniper Disposal EA. The BLM should republish this notice and correct the mistake.*

Response: While there is a typographical error in the text of the notice, the title and EA number reference the correct EA. I do not think that the notice needs to be republished.

Fuels/CX Comments: *The original CXs failed to address fuel loading and the impacts of roads. We are opposed to segmented NEPA analysis because it hides the full ecological impacts of this juniper project in two separate documents.*

Response: The BLM appropriately utilized its categorical exclusion authority for fuels and rangeland treatment projects. Fuel loading was an inherent purpose of cutting and piling of the juniper. Road building was not addressed in the original NEPA documents because it was not a part of the original proposed action. Temporary road building was analyzed in the EA. See comment response below.

After the material had been cut, the BLM encouraged the field offices (WO IM 2005-192) to “Increase biomass offered to 50% of mechanical fuels projects by 2008” because of the increasing marketability of biomass. This issue along with the rising concerns on air quality related to burning, prompted re-evaluation of the disposal methods prescribed in the individual original NEPA documents (see Table 3 below) that authorized the cutting and piling. On its own initiative the BLM determined that further NEPA analysis was necessary to address these changing concerns and conditions.

In addition, the Resource Management Plan authorizes utilization of up to 1,000 acres of juniper a year from juniper woodlands (Page 56 RMP), and the various Documentation of NEPA Adequacies (DNAs) were prepared to tier to the 1994 Final Klamath Falls Resource Area Resource Management

Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). However, in 2008 the BLM decided that a more site specific analysis was needed. Through monitoring the on the ground effects of utilization, resource specialists expressed concerns about whether the objectives of the RMP were being met. This further NEPA analysis has allowed the KFRA to address the cumulative effects of the collective juniper disposal actions and provide me with the appropriate information to make an informed decision.

Preparing the 2009 Juniper Disposal EA following the original NEPA documents that authorized the cutting and piling operations was not an attempt to segment the NEPA analysis, but rather a reaction to changing concerns and conditions.

Table 3. Fuels disposal method addressed in original NEPA document for each unit.

Unit Name	NEPA Document	Original Disposal Method
FTZ 110	OR-014-DNA-01-02 OR-014-DNA-04-20	Burn piles Juniper Yarding
Schnipps	OR-014-DNA-01-02 OR-014-DNA-03-16	Burn piles Juniper Yarding
North Willow Valley Sage	OR-014-CX-06-10	Burn piles
Pine Creek	OR-014-CX-06-02	Burn piles
Smith Reservoir	OR-014-CX-05-01	Burn piles or Yard material
Pitchlog Creek	OR-014-CX-08-09	None, leave on site
Miller Creek	OR-014-CX-08-09	None, leave on site
Potholes	OR-014-DNA-02-03	None, leave on site

Roads Comments: *The EA must analyze the impacts of road building 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 on rangeland, 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.*

Response:

The EA proposed up to five miles of temporary road construction in the units (See page 10 & Table 3). As stated on page 10, 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 of the EA 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 18 & 19), hydrology and water quality (Page 36-38), soils (Pages 47), Cultural Sites (Page 55), and Noxious Weeds (Pages 57-59). Some of the mitigation measures recommended in the EA and included in our decision are as follows:

- Identifying the noxious weed areas (medusa head) prior to yarding.
- Avoid concentrations of noxious weed areas when yarding.
- Seeding and or planting disturbed areas and burn pile scars with native seed/plants.

- Obliterating any new roads.
- Limit skidding to when soils are dry.
- Minimize landing size to less than 3% of the total yarded area.
- Renovate roads at key locations to reduce runoff.
- 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.

As stated above, I have determined that the North Willow Valley Sage unit will not be utilized. As a result, it is anticipated that up to 3 miles of temporary roads may be needed instead of 5 miles. The EA has analyzed the impacts for the proposed temporary roads. Although there will be some impact from roads, it is not outside of the actions covered by the 1995 RMP and analyzed in the 1994 EIS.

Biomass/Roads Comments: *Building roads in order to utilize biomass will have net negative ecological consequences. Improving roads for chip vans will have a bigger impact than improving roads for log trucks.*

Response: The environmental consequences of building roads are discussed in the EA (see above for page details). While chip vans require somewhat better road standards than log trucks, road improvements for chip vans will be largely the same as those required for log trucks. A few additional corners will require longer turns and some rough areas will require additional gravel or fill to allow chip vans. These actions were considered as part of the improvement. Chip van turn-arounds will be designated in areas where impacts can be limited, i.e. road junctions and landings.

Site Specificity/Roads: *There was no site specific analysis of roads.*

Response: The BLM used approximate skidding distances and unit size to approximate where temporary roads will be located. Layout on the ground will be finalized by the BLM COR (Contracting Officer's Representative) and the contractor in order to follow all BMP and PDF guidelines. An analysis was done of approximate temporary road locations and is available in the project record.

References provided with Road Comments: *Several references (Ortega and Capen 1999, Marsh and Beckman 2004, and Trombulack and Frissell 2000) were provided along with the comments to support the assertion that temporary road construction results in long-term effects.*

Response: Marsh and Beckman 2004-This article refers to the effects of roads in a forested landscape on terrestrial salamanders in Virginia. The conclusions drawn in this paper are for specific species in a habitat very different from the project area. The conclusions of this paper cannot be applied to the landscape addressed in the 2009 juniper disposal EA.

Ortega and Capen 1999- This article discusses road density and ovenbirds, an interior forest species, in Vermont. The project area that we are working in cannot be considered interior forest habitat and ovenbirds do not exist in Oregon. Therefore the conclusions in the article do not apply in this case.

Trombulack and Frissell 2000- This article discusses the effect of roads over a wide range of landscapes. It refers often to the importance of protecting roadless areas and reducing habitat fragmentation, neither of which are affected by the scope of this project. Most of the project units exist in areas that do not meet the size criteria for wilderness areas. In other areas in the Gerber Block that do meet size criteria, the BLM has performed a roadless review and determined that the opportunities for primitive and unconfined recreation are not outstanding. The building of

temporary roads through an often homogeneous landscape will not have these fragmentation affects. Likewise wildlife mortality and behavior modification, alteration of the chemical environment and changes in human land use will be limited due to the temporary nature of these roads.

Cumulative Impacts Comments: *The EA fails to disclose the full cumulative impacts of juniper cutting, removal and road building.*

Response:

As stated above, the previously prepared CXs and DNAs were appropriate and considered the cutting and burning of juniper. The cumulative effects analysis of the EA considered the cutting of juniper as a past action and the affected environment sections of the EA were written based on conditions that were current at the time. Therefore, the cumulative effects analysis in the EA considered both the previously analyzed cutting and the currently proposed utilization (Pages 14, 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 1994 RMP/EIS addressed the effects of proposed actions on the various alternatives on global climate (RMP/EIS pg. 4-7). The EIS analysis looked at carbon storage and carbon in the atmosphere. The RMP alternative selected authorized utilization (removal of carbon from the site) of up to 1,000 acres or juniper a year (15,000 acres potential as of the year 2010). Therefore, the selected actions are within the scope of the analysis.

The EA also addresses soil nutrient levels in the soil description (Page 40) as “deep, high organic matter, nutrient-enriched, surface soil, typically 60-80 cm thick”. The EA examines the potential loss of soil organic matter for each alternative in Pages 45-49. Under the selected actions, 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 nitrogen (and presumably other nutrients) and water which permits the understory to increase after juniper removal whether by cutting or fire (Bates et. al. 2007). This response has been observed on thousands of acres of KFRA lands where understory vegetation has been released from competition with overstory juniper. It appears that soils are capable of supporting a healthy and productive understory despite the loss of some site nutrients when encroaching junipers are removed.

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 2009 Juniper EA analyzes yarding of juniper that has already been cut and piled. No additional juniper will be cut under this DR. The 1994 RMP/EIS recognized that juniper had expanded its historical range and was invading former rangelands. This effect was further documented in the 2003 Gerber-Willow Valley Watershed Analysis. 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. Future juniper projects could also be targeted to improve formerly occupied sage grouse habitat.

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.

Livestock Comments: *We recommend that the agency remove livestock as a part of this project.*

Response: The environmental consequences and cumulative effects of this project on livestock grazing and rangeland health are included in the EA (p. 24-26). Livestock grazing has been analyzed in the KFRA RMP (Pages 62 and 63)

Literature Cited

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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 actions we have chosen.

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 2009 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 2009 Juniper Disposal EA is tiered.

B. Plan Consistency

Based on the information in the 2009 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 2009 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 2009 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.

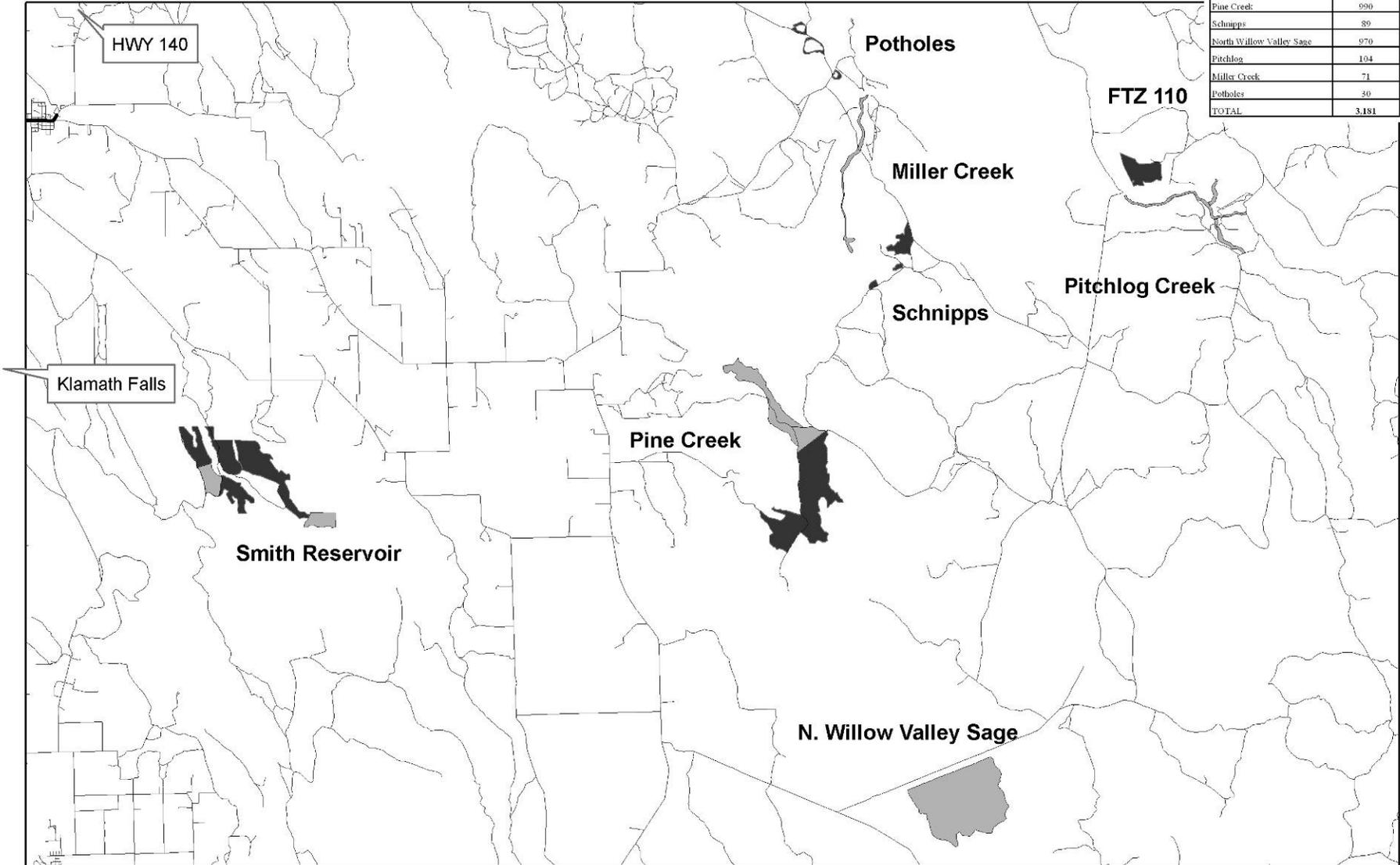
For additional information contact Don Hoffheins, Environmental Planner (541-885-4105) or Mike Bechdolt, Assistant Field Manager (541-885-4118).

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

02/05/2010
Date

2009 Juniper Disposal DR
 Willamette Meridian
 T.39S.-T.41S., R.11E.-R.14.5E.

Unit Name	Approximate Acres
FTZ 110	141
Smith Reservoir	786
Pine Creek	990
Schnipps	89
North Willow Valley Sage	970
Pitchlog	104
Miller Creek	71
Potholes	40
TOTAL	3,181



 Approximate Areas Not Utilized
 Approximate Areas to be Utilized

No warranty is made by the Bureau of Land Management as to the accuracy, reliability, or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data were compiled from various sources and may be updated without notification.

Klamath Falls Resource Area
Lakeview District - Bureau of Land Management
 2795 Anderson Ave. #25
 Klamath Falls, Oregon 97603
 (541) 883-6916



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