

**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 Interdisciplinary Team for 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 mitigations and project design features (Appendix B of the EA) 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.

Donald Holmstrom
Manager, Klamath Falls Resource Area

Date