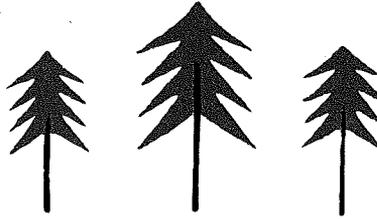


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July 25, 2011

Stephanie Kelleher
Pilot Joe Demonstration Project
BLM Ashland Resource Area
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, OR 97504

RE: PILOT JOE DEMONSTRATION PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Dear Ms. Kelleher

In response to the Pilot Joe scoping notice the Association of O&C Counties previously reviewed this project proposal and submitted comments to your office. Please reference this letter as it has a direct relationship to our comments on the Pilot Joe draft environmental assessment.

The Pilot Joe Demonstration Project as presently proposed does not meet the mandated requirements of the O&C Act of 1937. In addition, the proposal does not meet the legal restrictions imposed by Sec. 701(b) of FLPMA. The O&C Act requires that O&C lands be managed by BLM for permanent forest production. Timber thereon shall be sold, cut and removed in conformity with the principle of sustained yield for the purpose of providing a permanent timber supply, protecting watersheds, regulating stream flows and contributing to the economic stability of local communities and industries. The multiple use mandate and other provisions of FLPMA, however, do not limit or restrict timber production on O&C lands. Sec 701(b) FLPMA states that if there is any inconsistency between FLPMA and the O&C Act insofar as they relate to the management of timber resources then the O&C Act prevails.

The pilot's proposed action would treat approximately 900 acres of vegetation within the Applegate Adaptive Management Area. Approximately 33 percent of the acres are included in the proposed Pilot Joe commercial timber Sale. The remaining acres are to be treated non-commercially. All silvicultural applications are designed to test Drs. Johnson and Franklin's ecological principles on ecosystem restoration, sustainable timber harvest, conservation of ESA species, and economic stability to communities. Application of these principles, however, is constrained by standards and guidelines associated with the NWFP and by other constraints that have been implemented to limit commercial timber harvest within the Adaptive Management Area. For example, significant acreage containing large blocks of dense, older forest within the project area are excluded from timber harvest treatment. These lands are designated as Late Successional Emphasis Areas (LSEA), but to our knowledge have

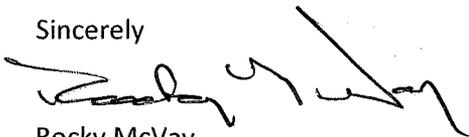
never been designated as critical habitat for endangered species. Designating LESA'S is contrary to Sec. 701(b) FLPMA. In addition, application of these principles are limited by: no treatments in riparian reserves; survey and manage requirements; no new road construction; and by restrictions on harvest systems and harvest operations. These constraints have resulted in designing a number of commercial timber harvest units that contain low quality timber. The Pilot Joe timber sale is marginal at best and may prevent companies from purchasing the timber. The remaining non-commercial treatment acres (approx 600 ac,) are proposed to be handled by a stewardship contract. Future implementation of this pilot strategy approach on other dry forest O&C lands will not resolve the issue of timber management on a sustained yield basis that is required by the O&C Act. It also will not provide the O&C Counties with sustainable revenues as required by the Act.

The draft EA is incomplete and does not meet the legal requirements of NEPA. With the exception of the No Action alternative the EA does not analyze other alternatives to the proposed action. The ecological principles set forth by Drs. Franklin and Johnson are worthy of investigating, but they should be examined by comparing their approach to other forest management strategies. The proposed action currently is not consistent with timber management guidelines and standards provided for Matrix or Uneven-Age Timber Management Area land use allocations described in the NWFP or WOPR. These plans also have different boundaries and management guidelines for riparian areas. In addition to the no action alternative the EA should include additional alternatives that meet the management direction provided by these plans. There needs to be a comparative analysis of all alternatives including the proposed action to understand the effects of each. For example, what is the projected timber sale volume and what are the environmental consequences of timber harvest for each alternative including the proposed action? How would the approach to timber management in riparian areas change based on an analysis of alternatives? The EA needs to demonstrate how these dry forest O&C lands can be best managed to achieve continuous timber production that can be sustained through a balance of growth and harvest as required by the O&C Act.

The proposed action alternative includes the decommissioning of 0.4 miles of existing road. Is this road a part of a reciprocal right of way? The EA should discuss the rationale for removal of this road and analyze the environmental consequences if the road remained to allow for future activities to occur?

If you have any questions please contact me at 541-412-1624, rocky@blupac.com or Van Manning at 253-549-0074, vanbonmanning@comcast.net.

Sincerely



Rocky McVay
Executive Director

Association of O&C Counties