

Reader's Guide

Pilot Thompson

Secretarial Pilot to Demonstrate Ecological Forestry

Dear Reader,

This Reader's Guide summarizes revisions made to the original Pilot Thompson EA and provides a list of the key features of my decision regarding the selection of a course of action to be implemented for the Pilot Thompson Project. A summary of the collaboration and public involvement that has occurred with this project has also been included. The Revised Environmental Assessment (REA) for the Pilot Thompson Project documented the environmental analysis conducted to estimate the site-specific effects on the human environment that may result from the implementation of the Pilot Thompson proposal. The Pilot Thompson EA was originally issued for public review on February 21, 2013. The EA public review period ended on April 26, 2013.

*Based on comment review, a Revised EA (REA) was issued on August 1, 2013, and is posted on the BLM Medford District website at:
<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/medford/plans/index.php>*

*The REA is also posted on the Pilot's website at:
<http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/medford/forestrypilot/>*

Regards,

*John Gerritsma
Ashland Field Manager
Medford District BLM*



Summary of EA Revisions

CHAPTER 1

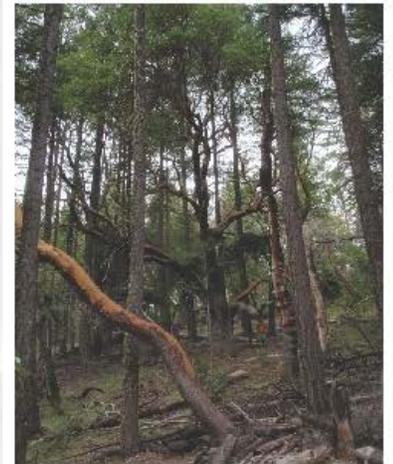
- Defined the term “Ecological Forestry” (p. 1-1).
- Updated Survey and Manage compliance language and affected resource analysis sections to reflect the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals opinion issued on April 25, 2013, that reversed the District Court for the Western District of Washington’s approval of the 2011 Survey and Manage Settlement Agreement (pp.1-8 to 1-9).
- Updated the Collaboration and Public Involvement section to incorporate additional public meetings and events that have taken place (pp. 1-13 to 1-14).

CHAPTER 2

- Reduced the amount of treatment area proposed to reflect the eliminations of RA-32 habitat (2 acres) for both Alternative 2 (pp. 2-2 and 2-3) and Alternative 3 (pp.2-14 and 2-15).
- Corrected Map 2-6 to accurately reflect that Alternative 3 does not include road construction (p. 2-20).
- Updated the project description for Alternative 3 to reflect the use of a swing trail at the end of road 39-4-20 to harvest Unit 19-4 (p. 2-21).
- Recognized that there must be some allowance for error in age estimation (p. 2-25).
- Added a PDF to include no broadcast burning in NRF habitat to insure that Coarse Woody Debris (CWD) is maintained (p.2-41).

CHAPTER 3

- Updated Ongoing and Foreseeable Future Actions section (p. 3-3) to include the Habitat Restoration Project on private lands along Thompson Creek.
- Updated the Fire and Fuels section to provide further clarification on the changes in micro-climate due to proposed harvesting activities (p.3-30 to 3-31).
- Revised the Soils analysis to correctly reflect the use of a tractor swing trail off of road 39-4-20 to access Unit 19-4 (under Alternative 3)(p.3-59).
- Updated the Wildlife analysis section to correctly reflect (1) the amount of proposed NRF downgrade under Alternative 2 (p. 3-106 to 3-108), (2) the amount of Critical Habitat downgrade (p.3-111), (3) the changes in Survey and Manage (p. 3-93, and 3-113 to 3-114), (4) the discovery of a new great gray owl reproductive site (p. 3-98 and 3-113), (5) the effects to Pacific fisher, and (6) the consideration of effects to wildlife corridors identified in the Middle Applegate Watershed Analysis (p. 3-108).
- Updated the Botany analysis section to reflect the changes in Survey and Manage (p. 3-122 to 3-124, 3-131 to 3-132).
- Updated the Literature Cited section to include Dugger et al 2011, Johnson and Franklin 2009, Johnson and Franklin 2012, Johnson and Franklin 2013, USDI 2013, USDI 2013a, USFWS 2013, and Wiens 2012.



Definitions

Late Successional Emphasis Area (LSEA):

large blocks (300-500 acres) of land identified during the planning process that would serve as areas of dense, closed-canopy contiguous forests within which little or no treatments would be proposed. LSEAs were developed in response to Franklin and Johnson’s dry forest restoration strategy that calls for the retention of dense forest habitat patches (in the hundreds of acres) at the landscape level, preferentially located in less fire-prone areas, such as steep north-facing slopes, riparian areas, and site protected by natural barriers, such as lakes (Franklin and Johnson 2012).

Ecological Forestry:

Drs. Franklin and Johnson’s proposals are based on “Ecological Forestry” concepts, which incorporate principles of natural forest development, including the role of natural disturbances, in the initiation, development, and maintenance of stands and landscape mosaics. Ecological Forestry starts with an ecological foundation and then factors in economic and cultural considerations. In this way, Ecological Forestry contrasts with Production Forestry, which utilizes agronomic and economic models in the efficient production of wood.

Ecological Forestry Continued:

Key elements of Ecological Forestry include (Franklin and Johnson 2012): (1) retaining structural and compositional elements of the pre-harvest stand during regeneration harvests; (2) utilizing natural stand development principles and processes in manipulating established stands to restore or maintain desired structure and composition; (3) using return intervals for silvicultural activities consistent with the recovery of desired structures and processes; and (4) planning management activities at landscape scales, using knowledge of spatial pattern and ecological function in natural landscapes (Johnson and Franklin 2013, p.4).

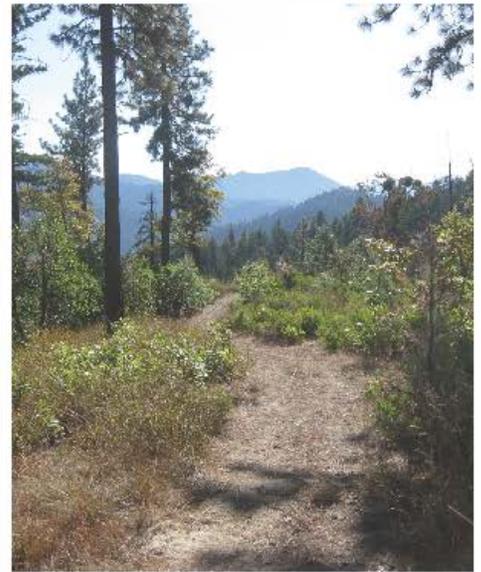
Restoration:

Franklin and Johnson define “restoration” broadly to encompass activities that are designed to restore forests and landscapes to conditions that are both more resistant and resilient to disturbances and that provide the diversity needed to restore and maintain native biodiversity and essential ecosystem functions.

Decision Record

Key Features of Final Decision

- Commercial harvest on 218 acres (Variable Density Thinning) using cable and tractor harvest methods.
- Follow-up pre-commercial thinning/fuels reduction treatments will occur to mitigate hazardous fuels generated from timber harvest (activity fuels).
- Temporary road construction of 39-4-20 road (proposed as Permanent in EA) and 38-4-34.1 road, for a total of 0.24 miles.
- Decommissioning of roads 38-4-28.2, 39-4-19, and 39-4-3.1 for a total of 1.21 miles.
- About 20 miles of road will be used as haul routes and maintained as described in the REA.
- Renovation of approximately 1.4 miles of road will occur on existing BLM roads, as described in the REA (p. 2-9) to access commercial harvest units.
- One designated skid trail will be constructed to access unit 20-1, as described in the REA (p.2-9).
- All applicable Project Design Features (PDFs) will be incorporated into the timber sale contract as required conditions of this project. A complete listing of the PDFs can be found in Chapter 2 I believe the decision for Alternative 2 with the described modifications is a balanced approach that will lead to a viable project while best addressing community and public concerns.



Definitions

Dry Forest (versus Moist Forest):

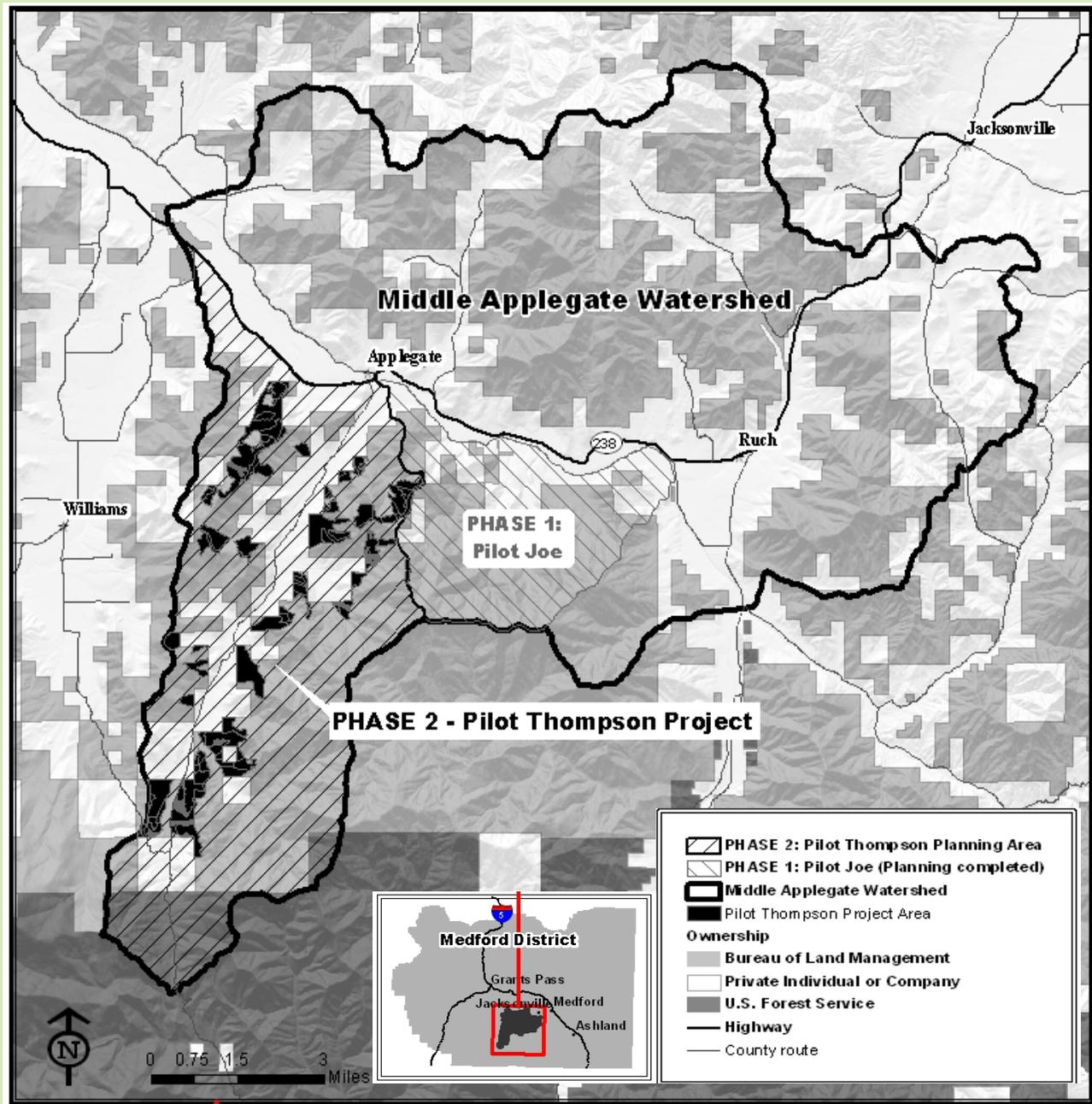
A classification of federally controlled forests in the PNW, rather than the traditional “westside” and “eastside”, using scientifically defined plant associations to assign forest sites as either Dry Forest or Moist Forest categories. These plant associations reflect distinctive compositions, growth conditions, and historical disturbance regimes, such as broad gradients in fire behavior in PNW forests that reflect variability in both site and landscape conditions (Franklin and Johnson 2012, p.2).

Why treat dry forests differently?

Drs. Franklin and Johnson have stated that active management of older forests on Dry Forest sites is often needed to reduce the potential for uncharacteristic and ecologically damaging wildfire and insect outbreaks. These events can result in large scale losses of habitat for wildlife including the northern spotted owl, large scale losses of hard-to-replace stand components, losses of harvestable timber now and into the future, and negative impacts to the sustainability of the current ecosystem dynamics. Drs. Franklin and Johnson suggest increasing the resistance/resilience of Dry Forests to wildfire, drought, insects, etc. by reducing stand densities, altering fuel structures, increasing overall diversity and the proportion of drought- and fire-tolerant tree species, and increasing stand diameter.



Project Map



Working Together

In collaboration with project partners (the Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative and the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council), the Medford District BLM has co-hosted numerous public events. To date, the Pilot Thompson planning process has:

- Included two scoping periods where the BLM has provided opportunities for the public to comment on the project (September 2011 and April 2012);
- Published a Scoping Report summarizing the issues identified during both scoping periods;
- Co-hosted six field trips (November 2011, September and October 2012, and March, April, and May 2013);
- Co-hosted four public meetings (October 2011, February 2012, and February and May 2013);
- Participated in two neighborhood meetings in the Thompson Creek area (April and May 2012);
- Sent an update letter to interested parties that outlined the preliminary proposed action alternative prior to the EA being published (November 2012);
- Has posted all planning documents, including interdisciplinary (ID) team meeting notes, public comment letters, maps, and field trip and public meeting information to the Pilot website in a timely manner; and
- Invited three members of the public to participate on the ID Team.

