

DECISION RECORD & CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW

Project Name: FY 2012 Tree Planting / Gopher Trapping (DOI-BLM-OR-M060-2012-0008-CX)

BLM Office: Ashland Resource Area, Medford District.

Contact Person: Doug Stewart @ (541) 618-2264

DESCRIPTION & LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED ACTION:

The Ashland Resource Area of the Medford District BLM proposes two types of silviculture land treatments; (1) planting tree saplings on up to 130 acres and (2) gopher trapping on 10 acres within past harvest or past wildfire areas in the Ashland Resource Area.

Planting would be accomplished using hand tools such as hoedads or shovels. Trees planted would be one to three (3) years old native conifers including Doulgas-fir, ponderosa pine, sugar pine, and incense cedar. They would be either bare-root or containerized seedlings and range from 6 to 16 inches in height. The soil around the planted tree would first be prepared by scalping away vegetation for up to a six (6) inch radius around the planting hole.

The proposed gopher trapping unit was harvested for timber about 20 years ago in an area where gophers make it difficult to establish new vegetation. This action is necessary to get both conifer and other wildlife habitat vegetation established to BLM minimum standards.

Gopher trapping involves searching for evidence of underground gopher "runways" (where they live) by looking for mounds of soil pushed above ground that are located at the end of their runways. A probe (stick, metal pole, etc.) is then used to find a soft area in the ground that is a hollow runway. Once the runway is found, it is dug out enough to place a metal trap in the runway. The hole is then covered leaving just enough light coming through to the runway to attract the gopher. Traps are then checked after 48 hours. They are kill traps similar to a small rodent trap that kills the animal almost instantly. Disturbance is limited to the areas where gopher runways exist and involves digging a hole large enough to place the trap underground, usually less than 6 inches in diameter. The traps are attached to wooden stakes that are visible above ground. Everything is removed once trapping is completed. The dead gopher carcasses would be left on each unit as food for eagles, ravens, and hawks.

Southern Oregon/Northern California coho salmon, Coho Critical Habitat, and Essential Fish Habitat are all located well outside the proposed treatment areas and would not be impacted by this project. There will be no effect on Federally-listed or Bureau Special Status botanical species.

Planned Treatment Periods:

- Silviculture treatments would be scheduled for completion in 2012.
- Tree Planting – March through June.
- Gopher Trapping – June through October.

Table 1. Proposed planting and Gopher Trapping Treatment Units:

Unit Name/ #	Legal T/R/S/Unit	Acres	Treatment
Dead Indian #15 - 124550	38S-3E-21-007	6	Gopher Trapping
Birdseye Fire #5-3 - 157891	37S-4W-5-015	4	Tree Planting
Buck Springs #4 - 124317	38S-3E-29-016	14	Tree Planting
Conde Flat #2 - 120404	38S-3E-8-003	18	Tree Planting
Conde Flat #2 - 122369	38S-3E-9-003	55	Tree Planting
Soda Jenny #1 - 121360	39S-4E-5-005	29	Tree Planting

The following Project Design Features are required conditions of all silviculture treatments:

For Watershed Protection (Soils, Water Quality, Hydrological Functions Riparian Reserves):

- Limit road use during the wet season on native surface (unsurfaced) roads to between May 15th and October 15th. Road use may occur outside this period if the road is sufficiently dry to protect both the road and resource values. Road use shall be suspended during precipitation events or if monitoring indicates that saturated soils exist to the extent that there is potential for causing elevated stream turbidity and sedimentation. No snow plowing of native surface roads will occur. Consultation with appropriate resource specialists (hydro, soils, fish) shall occur if road use is proposed during the wet season to determine if additional mitigation is required or use is appropriate for the conditions.
- Road use is permitted during the wet season on surfaced (aggregate, chip seal, paved) roads; however road use shall be suspended when there is potential for causing elevated stream turbidity and sedimentation. Snow plowing is permitted, but shall occur in a manner that will protect roads and adjacent resources by removing or placing snow berms to prevent concentration on the roadway or on erodible sideslopes and soils.
- Restrict all vehicles to open and existing roads.
- No digging may occur within the banks of any channel feature, nor within any designated wetlands, springs, or seeps (Table 2).

Table 2. No Treatment Buffers for Tree Planting

Stream Type or Feature	No Treatment Buffers (on each side of streams and around water bodies) for Tree Planting
Fish-bearing	10 feet
Perennial	10 feet
Intermittent (long-duration)	No planting within channel
Intermittent (short-duration)	No planting within channel
Dry draws	No buffer required
Springs, seeps, wetlands, ponds	No planting within feature

For the Protection of Cultural Resources:

- If during project implementation the contractor encounters or becomes aware of any objects or sites of cultural value on federal lands, such as historical or pre-historical ruins, graves, grave markers, or artifacts, the contractor shall immediately suspend all operations in the vicinity of the cultural value and notify the Contract Officer Representative (COR) so the site can be evaluated by a BLM archaeologist.

To minimize the spread of noxious weeds:

- Vehicle travel/parking is restricted to existing road prism.
- Meadow Knapweed infestation will be treated in 2012 (Table 5).

Table 3. Noxious Weed Treatments in Silviculture Units

Unit Name & No.	Acres	Treatments	Weeds
Birdseye Fire #5-3-157891	4	Herbicide spray	CEDET (Meadow Knapweed) occurs along the roadside above the unit. Treated in 2010. Treatment planned during spring/summer 2012.

PLAN CONFORMANCE

The proposed action is in compliance with the 2008 *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP)* and the 1995 Medford District Resource Management Plan, which incorporated the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and the Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (Northwest Forest Plan)* (USDA and USDI 1994).

This proposed action is consistent with the 2001 *Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendments to the Survey and Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines* (2001 ROD), as modified by the 2011 Settlement Agreement.

The proposed action is also in conformance with the direction given for the management of public lands in the Medford District by the Oregon and California Lands Act of 1937 (O&C Act), Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, the Clean Water Act of 1987, Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 (as amended 1986 and 1996), Clean Air Act, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as Amended (NHPA).

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW

Department of the Interior Regulations (43 CFR § 46.205(c)) require that any action that is normally categorically excluded must be evaluated to determine whether it meets any of the extraordinary circumstances listed in 43 CFR § 46.215. An action would meet one of the extraordinary circumstances if the action may:

- | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | <u>Categorical Exclusion Exception</u> |
|------------|-----------|---|
| () | (X) | 1. Have significant adverse effects on public health or safety. |
| () | (X) | 2. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resource; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas. |
| () | (X) | 3. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)] not already decided in an approved land use plan. |
| () | (X) | 4. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or unique or unknown environmental risks. |
| () | (X) | 5. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. |
| () | (X) | 6. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but significant cumulative environmental effects. (40 CFR 1508.7 and 1508.25(a)). |
| () | (X) | 7. Have adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. |
| () | (X) | 8. Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species. |
| () | (X) | 9. Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. |
| () | (X) | 10. Have disproportionate significant adverse impacts on low income or minority |

populations (Executive Order 12898).

- () (X) 11. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).
- () (X) 12. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or nonnative invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

COMPLIANCE WITH NEPA

In accordance with 43 CFR §§ 46.205 (c) and 46.215, the proposed action has been reviewed against the above twelve criteria, and I have determined that none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR § 46.205 (c) apply to this project. This project is categorically excluded from further documentation under the NEPA in accordance with the Department of the Interior Manual Section 516 DM 11.9 C (3) & (4) which allows for the:

“Reforestation of timber sales or burn areas...specific reforestation activities covered include: ...rodent trapping,” and “seeding or reforestation of timber sales or burn areas where no chaining is done, no pesticides are used, and there is no conversion of timber type or conversion of non-forest to forest land. Specific reforestation activities covered include: seeding and seedling planting, shading, tubing (browse protection), paper mulching, bud caps, ravel protection, application of non-toxic big game repellent, spot scalping, rodent trapping, fertilization of seed trees, fence construction around out-planting sites, and collection of pollen, scions and cones.”

DOCUMENT PREPARATION AND REVIEW

<u>Doug Stewart</u>	<u>Lead Forester/Silviculture</u>	<u>January 19, 2012</u>
Prepared by	Title	Date
<u>Stephanie Kelleher</u>	<u>Environmental Coordinator</u>	<u>February 2, 2012</u>
Reviewed by	Title	Date

DECISION

Based on this NEPA CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW, I have determined that the proposed action involves no significant impact to the human environment and that no further environmental analysis is required. It is my decision to authorize the requested silviculture land treatments.



John Gerritsma
Field Manager; Ashland Resource Area

2/29/12

Date

ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

Notice of the forest management decision to be made on the action described in this categorical exclusion will be posted on the Medford District internet website. The action is subject to protest under 43 CFR 4.450-2. A decision in response to a protest is subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals under 43 CFR part 4.