

Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)
Medford District, Grants Pass Field Office
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

Office: Grants Pass Field Office

Tracking Number: DOI-BLM-OR-M070-2015-0021-DNA

Environmental Analysis: DOI-BLM-OR-M000-2013-0004-EA

Proposed Action Title/Type: Provolt Riparian Restoration Project

Location / Legal Description / Land Use Allocation: Provolt Seed Orchard T37S, R4W, Section 6; T38S, R5W, Section 1 and 12; District Defined Reserve System - Forest Genetics Program

A. Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures

The Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council (APWC) propose to begin restoration efforts within the riparian areas along the Applegate River and Williams Creek at Provolt Seed Orchard. Invasive vegetation, including Armenian Blackberry, English Ivy, Poison Hemlock, Teasel, Vinca, and Reed Canary Grass (RCG) will be mechanically removed from approximately 50 acres of riparian areas, and replaced with a diverse mix of native trees and shrubs at 400-600 stems/per acre. These plantings will be maintained (mulched, watered and protected) for at least 3 years after planting and invasive species will continue to be monitored and mechanically suppressed. Native plant species will be chosen based on local riparian ecology and reference conditions as well as the ability to thrive.

Mechanical and non-powered tools will be utilized to remove invasive and non-native weeds. The APWC will be using a rubber-tracked mini excavator with an articulated flail mower, which they have recently acquired under a long-term lease for use in riparian projects, primarily funded via grants from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board. The APWC will not be utilizing herbicides. Disturbed areas will be replanted with native vegetation approved by the BLM.

The APWC will engage science classes from local Ruch and Williams schools, with a focus on environmental education and restoration. The APWC will also partner with the Klamath Bird Observatory to monitor riparian dependent bird populations within the Provolt site as an indicator of riparian recovery.

In the Applegate River, a side channel which could function as high flow refuge for resident and anadromous salmonids is currently dominated by RCG. Improvement of this off-channel refugia habitat includes removal of RCG and would especially benefit overwintering coho salmon. Selective grubbing of RCG mats will allow preparation of selected sites for native riparian species plugs and increase and enhanced survival rates of existing wetland emergents.

The Applegate River is listed by the ODEQ as 303 (d) water quality limited for summer temperature and most of this project will be in the highest intrinsic potential habitat for SONCC coho. The restoration efforts will address long-term shade and large wood recruitment, improvement of off-channel refugia habitat for salmonids, as well as erosion and agricultural runoff prevention. Removal of invasive non-native vegetation will begin in the Summer of 2015.

Project Design Features

Specific Best Management Practices (BMPs) and Project Design Features (PDFs) identified in the *Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Enhancement Environmental Assessment* (DOI-BLM-ORM000-2013-0004-EA) on pages 9 through 13 have been incorporated into the design of this project. The following PDFs are a combination of resource protection measures identified by the Interdisciplinary Team and Best Management Practices identified in the 1995 *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP) and the Biological Opinion for Aquatic Restoration Activities in the States of Oregon and Washington #NWP_2013-9664.

- All temporary travelways for the purpose of site access that is used over the course of the eradication activities will be selected to produce the least potential damage to soils and require the least removal of trees or shrubs. (ARBO II, modified p.55)
- To the extent feasible, heavy equipment will work from the top of the bank, unless work from another location (instream) would result in less habitat disturbance, less floodplain disturbance, less sediment in the stream channel, or less damage to the overall aquatic and riparian ecosystem. (ARBO II p.55)
- No refueling of chainsaws or heavy equipment would occur within 150 feet of any stream or wetland area. (DOI-BLM-ORM000-2013-0004-EA)
- All equipment used for instream work will be cleaned for petroleum accumulations, dirt, plant material (to prevent the spread of noxious weeds), and leaks repaired prior to entering the project area and as often as necessary during operation to remain grease free. (ARBO II, modified p.13)
- A no treatment buffer will extend 25 feet from the center of the Bridgeport Ditch system on both sites. Weed pulling will only occur outside of this buffer and to the southeast of the existing fence line.
- If previously unidentified cultural resources are discovered during operations connected with the proposed project, all related activities must cease immediately and the Authorized Officer should be notified. Operations may not continue until written authorization is received.
- A seasonal restriction will be placed on project activities from May 1 to July 15 for nesting Neotropical birds.

B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance

The project is in conformance with objectives, land use designation, and management direction in the 1995 ROD/RMP for the Medford District Forest Genetics Program. Watershed restoration is addressed in the Medford District ROD/RMP as one of the four components of the Northwest Forest Plan's Aquatic Conservation Strategy (ACS). The primary objective of the ACS is to restore and maintain the ecological health of watersheds and aquatic ecosystems contained within them on public lands. This project will accomplish re-establishment of native riparian vegetation at the Provolt Seed Orchard in the Lower Applegate and Williams Creek.

The project is also in conformance with the Provolt Seed Orchard Integrated Pest Management Environmental Impact Statement 2005 & Record of Decision 2006. The Provolt Riparian Restoration project *does not* include the use of herbicides. Although it is in compliance with the decision in the EIS, specifically to utilize, "cultural methods for vegetation include hand-pulling or using non-powered and powered hand tools and machinery to cut and clear vegetation (Proposed Action Chapter 2-13, FEIS)." "Remove noxious weeds and control vegetation that favors animal pests and disease conditions and reduce fire hazard conditions (BLM Decision – Alternative B, ROD p. 2)." "Cultural control methods to treat vegetation including hand-pulling...hand tools to cut and grub; tractors with various blade attachments for moving; gasoline-powered trimmers; and brush cutter machine mounted on tractors (ROD 2006, Alternative B, p. 5)."

The authorized Alternative B with Environmental Protection Emphasis Proposed actions in the EA are identified in the 1995 RMP as actions necessary to enhance natural populations of fish (RMP/ROD, pp. 49-50); increase instream habitat, channel stability, complexity and passage (RMP/ROD, pp. 23-28).

This project also conforms with the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (Northwest Forest Plan FSEIS, 1994 and ROD, 1994).

C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the Proposed Action.

- *Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Enhancement Environmental Assessment* (EA# DOI-BLM-OR-M000-2013-0004-EA) (March 2014) and Decision Record (April 2014).
- *Williams Watershed Analysis* (March 1996).
- *Water Quality Restoration Plan*, Southern Oregon Coastal Basin, Applegate Subbasin, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Medford District, and US Forest Service (USFS), Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest (January 2005).
- Pursuant with the Endangered Species Act, BLM consulted on all actions authorized by the decision with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). All proposed projects would be consistent with actions identified by the NMFS (Fisheries BO 2013/9664) and the USFWS (Wildlife BO

#01EOFW00-2013-F-0090, and Plant LOC #01EOFW00-2014-I-0013) for Programmatic Consultation on Fish Habitat Restoration Activities in Oregon and Washington.

- Final Medford District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement, and Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (EIS, 1994 and RMP/ROD, 1995)
- Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement: Management of Port-Orford-Cedar in Southwest Oregon(FSEIS 2004) and ROD(2004)

This proposal also complies with the direction given for the management of public lands in the Medford District by the Oregon and California Lands Act (O&C Act) of 1937, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, the Clean Water Act of 1987, the Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974 (as amended 1986 and 1996), the Clean Air Act of 1970, and the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979.

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

- 1. Is the new Proposed Action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?** The 2015 Provolt Riparian Restoration Project is analyzed under the 2013 *Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Enhancement EA*. The proposed project activity is the same as listed under Alternative 2 of the EA, in which “riparian vegetation treatments seek to restore plants species composition and structure...and improve riparian conditions intended to increase species diversity and to protect legacy trees that would provide habitat and structure to the stream channel (EA, p.6). Native plant species (trees, shrubs, sedges and grasses) would be manually translocated, collected, propagated and planted (EA, p. 7). “Reconnecting side channels or floodplain areas offers another opportunity to reduce bank shear stress and may be implemented to improve floodplain function and off channel habitat. Actions to restore side channels and floodplains could include the removal of sediment plugs which block water movement through side channels and alcoves. Construction could involve the use of heavy equipment, such as excavators, spidders, backhoes, and dump trucks (EA, p. 9).”
- 2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new Proposed Action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?** The range of alternatives analyzed in the 2013 *Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Enhancement EA* is appropriate given the current environmental concerns, interest and resource values for the Provolt Riparian Restoration Project. The explosion of invasive non-native noxious vegetation is concerning to the BLM, local community and the Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council. The alternatives analyzed are appropriately analyzed for maintaining integrity of riparian zones, providing that Coho are a priority for stream enhancement activities, encouraging partnerships and using an interdisciplinary approach to project development, particularly in Riparian Reserves (EA, p. 52).

There are two identified historic properties within the project's Area of Potential Effect (APE): 1) The Bridgeport Ditch system (OR110-1798), and 2) the Williams Creek Bridge (OR110-1207). In consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), both sites were determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Although eligible properties are present, a no effect determination has been reached as per the National Historic Preservation Act based on the Project Design Features. Project activities would not affect the Williams Creek Bridge.

- 3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, and updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new Proposed Action?** An interdisciplinary team of resource specialists reviewed the proposed project and determined that no significant changes in circumstances or significant new information have occurred since the EA was written. All required surveys are completed for plants, wildlife, and cultural resources. If listed species are present at a project site or area, that site will be protected as consistent with the most recent Medford District protocols. Project implementation will not change but may be reduced in scope, and therefore would not substantially affect the analysis.

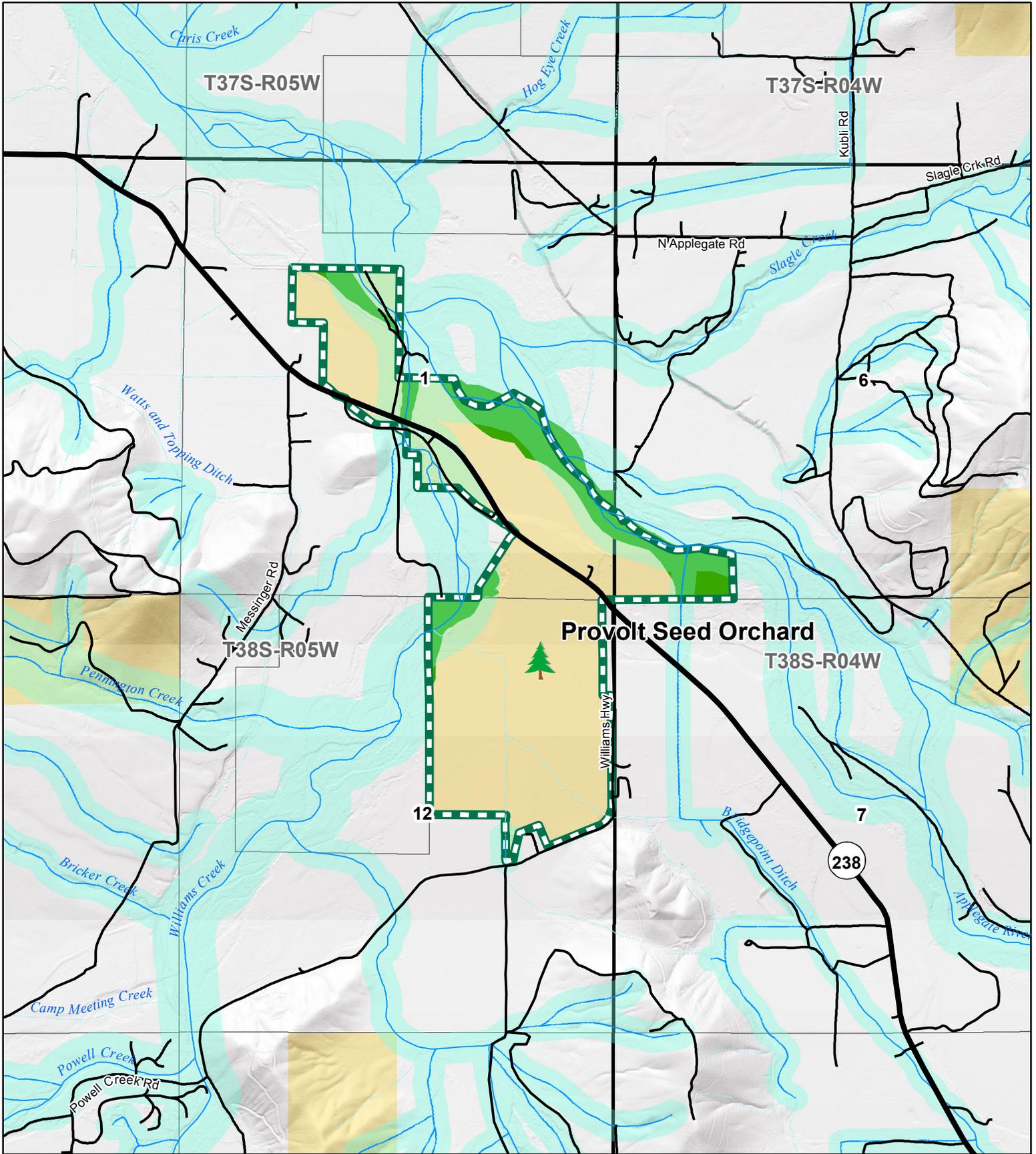
Since the release of the 2013 *Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Enhancement EA*, the status of the fisher has changed. Specifically, the USFWS issued a proposal to list the West Coast Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of fisher (*Pekania pennanti*) as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act in the Federal Register (Federal Register/Vol. 79, No. 194/Tuesday, October 7, 2014/Proposed Rules, pages 60419-60425) on October 7, 2014. Fisher are not expected to occur within the project area and no fisher habitat is affected.

- 4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new Proposed Action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?** The direct, indirect and cumulative effects that would result from the Provolt Riparian Restoration project are similar to those analyzed under the 2013 *Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Enhancement EA*. The proposed project was analyzed in Alternative 2 for riparian vegetation activities (EA, p. 6) and off-side channel habitat restoration projects (EA, p. 9).
- 5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current Proposed Action?** Public involvement for the *Aquatic and Riparian Habitat Enhancement EA* began in January 2013. The EA was made available for a 30-day public comment period in March 2014. The public was notified via a newspaper notice and letters to individuals, Tribes, organizations, and government entities who expressed a wish to contribute to be informed about the project. The BLM received three comments (Decision Record, p. 7) generally in support of the project, but voicing some concerns. One of those concerns was large scale removal of blackberries and concern with use of herbicides. The Provolt Riparian Restoration Project proposes to remove a range of invasive non-native noxious weeds including Armenian Blackberry and English Ivy, Poison Hemlock, Teasel, Vinca, and Reed Canary Grass. The context and intensity of the proposed





Provolt Riparian Restoration Project



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.

Road

Stream

Perennial

Intermittent

Ephemeral

Provolt Seed Orchard

Riparians

Provolt Riparian Restoration Project

Ownership

Bureau of Land Management

Private



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