

**Third Decision Record
for
Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage
EA #OR115-08-02**

Background

The Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Butte Falls Resource Area is proposing to salvage trees blown down during January 2008 windstorms. The BLM completed the environmental analysis for salvage on 6,100 acres and published the *Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage Environmental Assessment (EA)* on July 25, 2008. The BLM consulted on the effects of this project with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service as required under the Endangered Species Act. The BLM received Letters of Concurrence from both Services, dated July 10, 2008 and August 12, 2008, respectively. The letters concurred with the BLM's determination that the project is not likely to adversely affect any species listed as Threatened or Endangered under the Endangered Species Act. The EA was subject to a 30-day public comment period that ended August 26, 2008.

On September 3, 2008, the BLM issued a *Finding of No Additional Significant Impact* and decided to implement a portion of the proposed action, as described in the first *Decision Record for Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage*, dated September 3, 2008. The first Decision Record represented approximately 57 percent (3,500 acres) of the 6,100 acres analyzed in the EA. In that decision, the BLM deferred implementation of a portion of the salvage project to allow the Butte Falls Field Manager more time to consider concerns received from the public.

A second Decision Record was issued on November 12, 2008 on 1,215 acres of BLM-matrix lands, 70 acres of riparian reserves, and 30 acres of late-successional reserve (known northern spotted owl activity center). The BLM has implemented salvage harvest on the matrix acres identified in these two Decision Records. The BLM has chosen not to implement the salvage within the 70 acres of riparian reserve and the 30 acres of late-successional reserve.

Decision

My decision is to implement in part the actions proposed and analyzed under Alternative 3 in the EA.

My Decision is to

1. salvage trees blown down during the storm, storm-damaged trees not likely to survive (as defined in the EA), insect-killed trees, and trees hazardous to the public or workers on approximately 70 acres of BLM-administered matrix lands;
2. reduce the amount of slash and additional fuel hazard created by the windstorm on approximately 70 acres.

My decision will implement actions in locations described below and all required Project Design Features (PDFs), as described in the EA.

The actions implemented by this Decision occur on

Matrix lands in

Township 33 South, Range 3 East, sections 31;
Township 34 South, Range 3 East, sections 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29;
Willamette Meridian, Jackson County, Oregon.

Decision Rationale

My decision to authorize the proposed action is in compliance with the current *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP)*, dated April 1995 and the *Northwest Forest Plan*, dated April 1994 (EA p. 5). The proposed action complies with all applicable standards and guidelines. This action takes into consideration cumulative impacts of past harvesting and silviculture practices on nearby private and Federal lands. All required Threatened and Endangered (T&E), Special Status Species (SSS), and cultural surveys were completed and mitigation was applied, where appropriate.

This action meets the purpose and need, identified in the EA, to salvage timber on BLM lands in the Butte Falls Resource Area affected by the windstorm in the Big Butte Creek, South Fork Rogue River, Rogue River/Lost Creek, and Little Butte Creek 5th field watersheds. Timber sales resulting from this decision will produce revenue for the Federal government and contribute approximately 420 thousand board feet of timber toward the Medford District's 2009 Allowable Sale Quantity of 57 million board feet. Salvage and associated fuels treatment will reduce the existing fuel hazard created by the windstorm.

In preparing the EA, the BLM analyzed the impacts of the proposed action for the following issues: economics; potential insect epidemic; increased fuels; and recovery of severely damaged riparian reserves, known northern spotted owl activity center, and matrix land. The BLM determined the impacts will be within those analyzed in the Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Medford District Resource Management Plan (PRMP/EIS) or were otherwise insignificant. Discussion of those impacts can be found in the EA available at the Medford District Office, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, Oregon, or online at <http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/medford>.

I have chosen Alternative 3 because it most completely meets the identified purpose and need for the following reasons:

The Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage project is located on BLM-administered lands subject to the requirements of the O&C Lands Act which directs that O&C lands be managed for "permanent forest production . . . in accord with sustained-yield principles" (ROD/RMP p. 17). The Medford District ROD/RMP established certain land use allocations designed to address "the need for a sustainable supply of timber and other forest products that will help maintain the stability of the local and regional economies and contribute valuable resources to the national economy on a predictable and long-term basis" (ROD/RMP p. 16-17). The ROD/RMP (p. 38) allocated matrix lands for "produc[ing] a sustainable supply of timber." Implementing this decision contributes an

estimated 8 million board feet (MMBF) of timber from these matrix lands toward the Medford District Allowable Sale Quantity, thus meeting the timber resource objectives in the Medford District RMP (ROD/RMP p. 17, 72-73) and one of the purposes identified for this project (EA p. 5).

Another identified purpose for the project is to reduce the “potential breeding habitat for bark beetles, wood borers, and other insects” (EA p. 4 and 45). While it is not possible to precisely predict what insect populations will do, blowdown in previous large windstorms have consistently resulted in higher insect populations. Insect population levels outside of the range of natural variability may cause the mortality of healthy green trees. ROD/RMP direction (p. 189) is to limit the increase of endemic levels of insects. The intent of the salvage is not to eliminate insects in the Project Area, but to reduce “breeding habitat” and the potential build-up of large insect populations.

Salvage and fuels treatments provide an opportunity to reduce the amount of surface fuels and additional fuel hazard created by the windstorm. Reducing the fuels allows for a better chance to safely reduce the risk of large fires to the town of Butte Falls and other neighboring communities within the Wildland Urban Interface, Ginger Springs Municipal Watershed, road infrastructure, adjacent private lands, and critical resources (EA p. 58). The ROD/RMP direction (p. 89 and 91) is to lower the risk of high intensity, stand-replacing fires which can damage natural resources and homes and threaten the safety of individuals and fire fighters by reducing natural fuel hazards on BLM-administered lands in rural interface areas and reducing both natural and activity-based fuel hazards. The greatest potential for extreme fire behavior exists during the first 5 years after the blowdown.

Consultation and Coordination

Section 7(a)(2) of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) states that each Federal agency shall, in consultation with the Secretary, insure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of a listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of designated critical habitat.

The BLM consulted with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), listed as “threatened” species under the ESA. Informal consultation was completed and the Service concurred with the BLM’s determination that the proposed action may affect, is not likely to adversely affect the northern spotted owl or designated northern spotted owl critical habitat. The BLM received a Letter of Concurrence from US Fish and Wildlife Service on July 10, 2008.

The BLM consulted with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on Southern Oregon/Northern California coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), listed as a “threatened” species under the ESA. The BLM determined the only portion of the Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage project that may affect coho salmon is within the Big Butte Creek 5th field watershed. The BLM received a Letter of Concurrence from NMFS on August 12, 2008, concurring with the BLM’s determination of affects.

The Klamath Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, and the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde were notified of this project during the scoping process for the EA.

Jackson County Commissioners, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Oregon Department of Forestry were also notified during scoping and the EA public review period.

Public Involvement

The Butte Falls Resource Area mailed a scoping letter to a total of 90 individuals, businesses, organizations, tribes, and government agencies on May 28, 2008 to initiate scoping for the Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage project. Scoping recipients had either requested to be notified of such projects, were government entities, or owned land in the Project Area. The BLM held a public meeting on June 12, 2008 in the community of Butte Falls. The information sharing meeting was advertised in the *Medford Mail Tribune* and was attended by about 20 individuals. A total of 15 comment letters, public meeting comment forms, and e-mails were received from adjacent land owners, private citizens, timber companies, organizations, and environmental groups concerning the proposed salvage project.

The BLM conducted a field trip with Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center on May 7, 2008 to show the effects of the windstorm and discuss the BLM project proposal.

The BLM met with Southern Oregon Timber Industry Association (SOTIA) on May 13, 2008 and Jackson County Natural Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) on June 17, 2008 to apprise them of the Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage project.

On August 14, 2008 the BLM met with Jackson County Commissioners to discuss the Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage proposal on BLM-administered lands.

A formal public comment period for the project was held from July 27 to August 26, 2008. The public was notified through a newspaper notice in the *Medford Mail Tribune* and the *Upper Rogue Independent*. Letters and copies of the EA were sent to 29 individuals, organizations, and government entities. The BLM received seven letters containing comments on the EA.

Administrative Remedies

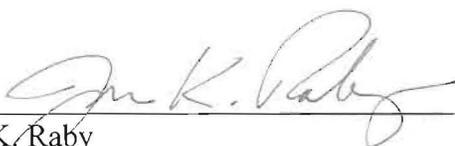
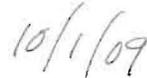
This decision is a forest management decision. Administrative remedies are available to persons who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Administrative recourse is available in accordance with BLM regulations and must follow the procedures and requirements described in 43 CFR § 5003 - Administrative Remedies.

Under BLM Forest Management Regulations 43 CFR § 5003.2, a decision is not effective until a notice of decision appears in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located. Multiple separate notices of decision will be published for this decision record, each constituting the decision document and establishing the effective date for separate portions of the Decision Record, as follows:

- A notice of decision will be posted for the salvage activities in the areas identified in this decision under 43 CFR 5003.2(a) and (c).

This notice of decision, in the *Medford Mail Tribune* shall constitute the publication date of the decision document for this Decision Record. This publication date likewise establish the date initiating the separate protest period provided for in accordance with 43 CFR § 5003.3 for this decision document. While similar notices may be published in other newspapers, the date of publication in the *Medford Mail Tribune* will prevail as the effective date for each notice of decision.

Under 43 CFR 5003.3 subsection (a), protests may be filed with the authorized officer within 15 days of the publication date of the notice of decision. Under 43 CFR 5003.3 (b), protest filed with the authorized officer shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision. As interpreted by BLM, the regulations do not authorize acceptance by the BLM of protests in any form other than a signed, paper document that is delivered to the physical address of the BLM office within the 15-day period. Therefore, e-mail, verbal, or facsimile protests will not be accepted. A decision on a protest would be subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, although, under 43 CFR 5003.1 subsection (a), filing a notice of appeal under 43 CFR part 4 does not automatically suspend the effect of a decision governing or relating to forest management under 43 CFR 5003.2 or 5003.3.

 
Jon K. Raby Date
Field Manager
Butte Falls Resource Area