



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Medford District Office
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, Oregon 97504
email address: BLM_OR_MD_Mail@blm.gov

IN REPLY REFER TO:
1792(M060)

MAY 14 2014

Dear Interested Public:

The Medford District Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Ashland Resource Area, is in the beginning stages of planning the *Nedsbar Forest Management Project*, located in the Upper Applegate and Little Applegate River Watersheds (Enclosure 1).

What is BLM Proposing?

The BLM is proposing to conduct forest management activities on land allocated as the Applegate Adaptive Management Area (AMA) in the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP). The activities that may be proposed include pre-commercial thinning, commercial timber harvest, and hazardous and post-treatment fuels reduction treatments. Transportation management activities, including road construction, closure, maintenance, and decommissioning may also be proposed on BLM-administered lands in the Upper Applegate and Little Applegate River Watershed areas. Timber would be harvested using tractor, cable, or helicopter yarding systems. The proposed action would utilize a combination of commercial timber sale contract(s) and service contract(s).

An estimated 3,400 acres have been identified for commercial harvest and/or fuels reduction treatments in the approximately 48,182 acre Nedsbar planning area. Pre-commercial thinning may also be proposed in some commercial units.

Why is BLM Proposing the Nedsbar Forest Management Project?

The Nedsbar Project is designed to implement specific Management Objectives consistent with the BLM's 1995 Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) in the Nedsbar planning area. Specifically, this forest management proposal is designed to:

- Ensure sustainable forest production, and the renewable resources they provide, by managing forests to improve conifer forest vigor and growth (USDI 1995, pp. 72-73);
- Maintain a transportation system within the planning area that serves the management of resource program areas, including timber management, in an environmentally sound manner (USDI 1995, pp. 84-88); and
- Provide forest products from lands allocated to planned, sustainable harvest (USDI 1995, pp. 72-73).

Forest Management and Forest Products

One of the applicable laws governing a portion of BLM-administered lands in the planning area is the Oregon and California Railroad and Coos Bay Wagon Road Grant Lands Act of 1937 (O&C Act), for which sustainable timber production is the primary purpose. The BLM-administered lands in the Project Planning Area are located within the Applegate AMA, as designated in the 1994 Northwest Forest Plan and 1995 Medford District RMP to contribute to the achievement of SEIS ROD objectives, including the provision of a stable timber supply (USDI 1995, p. 36; USDI 1994, p. 6). Specific emphasis for the Applegate AMA includes, "development and testing of forest management practices, including partial cutting, prescribed

burning, and low-impact approaches to forest harvest (e.g. aerial systems) that provide for a broad range of forest values, including late-successional forest and high quality riparian habitat” (USDI 1995, p. 36).

Timber products produced from the Nedsbar Project area would be sold in support of the District’s Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) declared in the 1995 Medford District RMP (USDI 1995, pp. 17, 72-73).

Forest stands selected for treatment in the Nedsbar planning area are overstocked or have been impacted by disease, drought, or insects. As trees compete for limited water, nutrients, and growing space, they become stressed and more susceptible to mortality from insects, forest pathogens, and drought. Forest thinning treatments are needed to maintain vigorously growing forest stands, which are more fire-resilient and resistant to insect and disease attacks, in accordance with sustained yield forestry and to capture tree mortality in compliance with RMP guidance (USDI 1995, p. 186). The management of coarse woody debris, green trees and snags will be conducted in a manner that meets the intent of the management actions/directions for the Matrix (USDI 1995, pp. 37, 74).

The 1995 Medford District RMP adopted a set of silvicultural treatments for managing conifer forests on BLM-administered lands (USDI 1995, Appendix E). A brief summary of the silvicultural objectives and prescriptions for the Nedsbar Project is included (Enclosure 2). These silvicultural prescriptions, designed under the principles of sustained yield forestry, will respond to both forest and site conditions to meet the desired long-term goals for each forest stand type. The silvicultural prescriptions will be described in further detail in the forthcoming Environmental Assessment.

Transportation Management

The existing transportation system in the Nedsbar planning area may be insufficient to provide economically feasible operational access to BLM-administered lands in need of forest management. Road construction may be proposed to facilitate access to areas proposed for treatment.

Road conditions in some areas may be in need of maintenance or renovation to reduce the potential for road-related erosion and sedimentation to stream courses and/or to accommodate vehicle traffic for which they were designated. Therefore, road maintenance and renovation may also be proposed.

A portion of the Nedsbar planning area (662 acres of potential treatment acres) is located within the Little Applegate and Beaver Creek Tier 1 Key Watersheds. Therefore, road densities should be reduced within those portions of those Key Watersheds (if funding allows), or at minimum remain at current levels; therefore, road decommissioning may be a part of the proposed action (USDI 1995, pp. 22-23, 87). Please refer to the *Proposal Development* section below for more information.

Proposal Development

Transportation Management Inventory and Assessment

An inventory and review of the existing transportation system (including non-system roads) is being conducted to aid in the assessment of the current condition, to evaluate the transportation system for an appropriate level of management, as well as to identify opportunities to reduce road densities. The process will specifically identify:

- Roads that need maintenance to restore, repair, or improve road surfaces, culverts, and roadside drainage ditches in order to reduce road-related erosion and sedimentation to stream courses;
- Roads that are no longer serving resource program needs and whether those roads are contributing to sedimentation and riparian habitat fragmentation;
- Roads needed to provide access to forest stands identified as needing management; and
- Roads under existing agreements for private land access and reciprocal right-of-ways (ROWS).

Road construction, road decommissioning (both natural and mechanical), as well as road closures and road maintenance, may be included in the proposed action to address the needs identified during the assessment process. The assessment is expected to be completed in Fall 2014.

What is BLM Asking the Public?

The BLM will be preparing an Environmental Assessment that will document the expected environmental effects of the proposed Nedsbar Forest Management Project. In order to appropriately address issues relevant to the proposal in the forthcoming Environmental Assessment, we are seeking your input. If you would like to provide information on potential issues or concerns that the environmental analysis of this proposed action should address, or provide input on potential alternative action(s) that could meet the stated objectives for this proposed project, please submit your comments to **Chamise Kramer, Nedsbar Forest Management Project, Medford District BLM, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504, or email to ckramer@blm.gov**. Comments should be as specific as possible.

If you do not have comments at this time but would like to be kept informed as planning progresses on this project, please complete and return the enclosed Interest Response Form (Enclosure 3) and your name will be maintained on the mailing list for this project. Your input will be most useful if it is received by **June 16, 2014**. However, comments will be accepted and reviewed up until the time a decision on the project is made. Those responding to this or other public notices concerning the Nedsbar Forest Management Project will be notified when the *Nedsbar Forest Management Project Environmental Assessment* becomes available for public review.

Please note that all written submissions from private individuals in response to this notice, including your name, address, telephone number, email address, or other personal identifying information may be made available for public inspection and disclosure, unless you specifically request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your personal identifying information from public review or disclosure, you must state this at the beginning of your written comment and provide justification for doing so. We will honor such requests to the extent allowed by law, but you should be aware that release of that information may be required under certain circumstances. All submissions from organizations or businesses and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organization or business will be made available for public inspection and disclosure in their entirety.

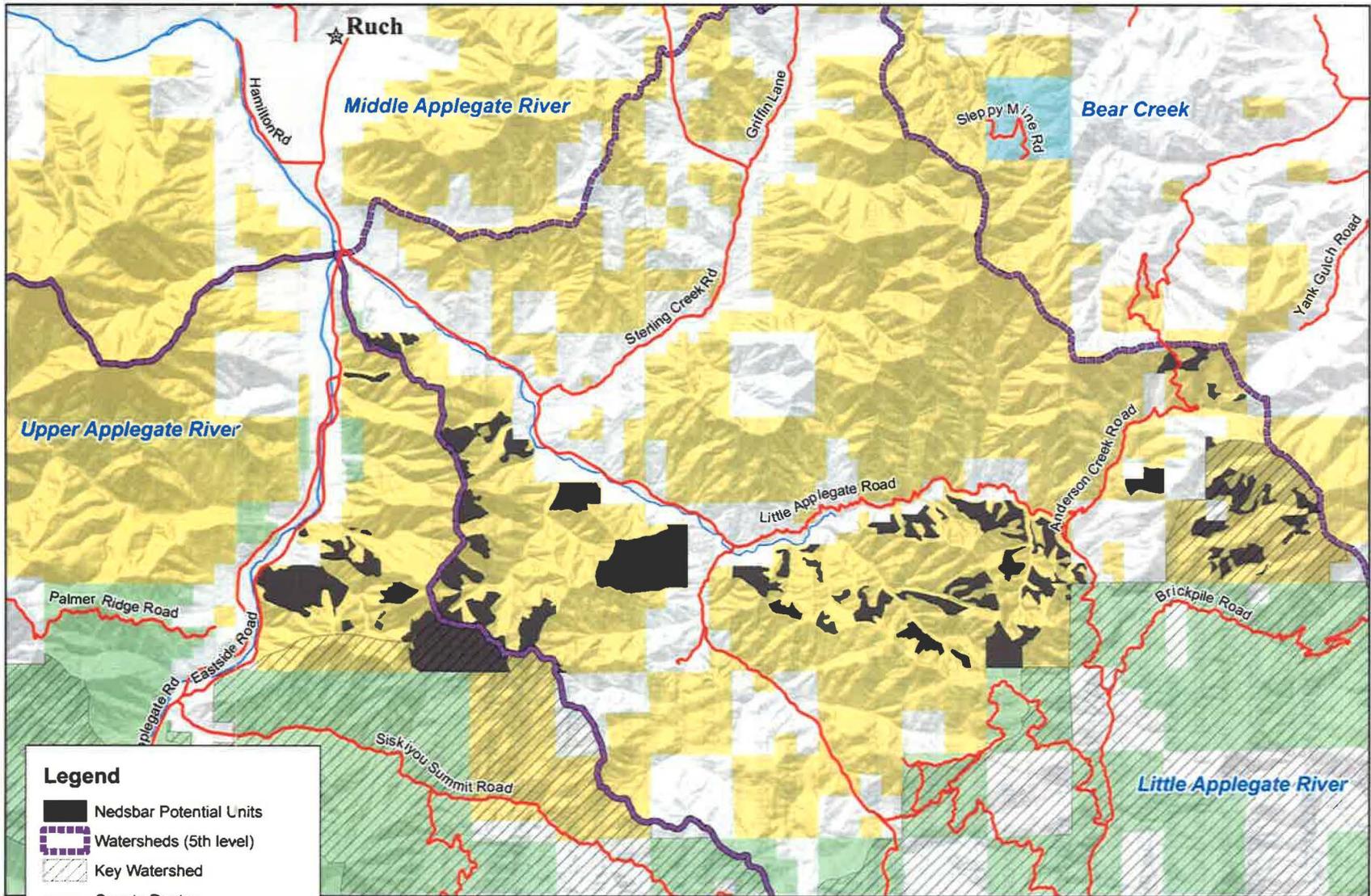
Further information on this proposed project is available at the Medford District Office, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, Oregon 97504 or by calling Chamise Kramer, Environmental Coordinator, at (541) 618-2450.

Sincerely,



John Gerritsma
Field Manager
Ashland Resource Area

Enclosures



Legend

- Nedsbar Potential Units
- Watersheds (5th level)
- Key Watershed
- County Routes
- Bureau of Land Management
- U.S. Forest Service
- State
- Private/Unknown



Nedsbar Forest Management Project
May 2014



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.

Enclosure 2. Summary of Silvicultural Objectives and Prescriptions

The silvicultural objectives for treatment are as follows:

- 1) Reduce stand density to increase the growth, quality, and vigor of the remaining trees;
- 2) Create diversified stand structure (height, age, and diameter classes);
- 3) Increase resilience/resistance of forest stands to wildfire, drought, insects, etc. by reducing stand densities and ladder fuels;
- 4) Increase growing space and decrease competition for large and/or legacy pine, oak, and cedar;
- 5) Create growing space for a new cohort of trees and/or increase the growth of existing understory trees;
- 6) Reduce understory stem density in the current stand and control the growth rates of existing understory trees for long-term survivability;
- 7) Create regeneration opportunities for species that are shade-intolerant and provide long-term success or survival of less prominent species (e.g. sugar pine and white oak);
- 8) Reduce the long-term effects of forest disease by reducing the spread of disease to existing overstory and understory trees.

Density Management

This stand prescription would generally target smaller trees over larger trees (thin from below) to reduce stand density in order to promote the growth and structural development of the remaining stand. Density management can be used to promote desired stand characteristics for wildlife habitat based on canopy and basal area targets. Small openings and/or leave patches may be created in forest stands to promote desired structural features or wildlife habitat components, in some cases.

Density Management/Selection

This stand prescription would generally target low vigor trees over healthy trees (proportional thinning and low thinning) to reduce stand density and improve stand resiliency and individual tree health. This prescription can be used to accelerate the growth of remaining trees while promoting desired species that are best adapted to site conditions. Spatial distribution of leave trees should be based on tree condition (live crown ratio and crown form), as opposed to leaving trees based on a distance grid. Trees would be removed singly or in groups and stands will have a wide range of basal area or tree spacing targets based on stand types or conditions.

Regeneration Harvest

Regeneration harvest (Douglas-fir) is proposed in stands with declining growth rates or experiencing deterioration from high stand density levels or other factors. The minimum number of retained trees varies from 16-25 green conifer trees per acre greater than 20 inches DBH (diameter at breast height). The preferred retained trees would be the largest, full-crowned healthy trees. Leave trees may be arranged in clumps rather than in a uniform pattern throughout the stand. Commercial harvest would generally be followed up with prescribed burning or site prep and tree planting of mixed conifer species.

Disease Management

Disease Management treatments are proposed in stands with declining growth rates attributed to the presence of insects or disease. The minimum number of retained trees would be 6-8 large green trees per acre, depending on site-specific conditions such that implementation of a Disease Management prescription would not increase the presence of the disease, and where possible, affected trees would contribute to the achievement of land use allocation objectives. The preferred retained trees would be the largest, full-crowned healthy trees. Leave trees may be arranged in clumps rather than in a uniform pattern throughout the stand. Commercial harvest would generally be followed up with prescribed burning or site prep and tree planting of mixed conifer species.

Mortality Salvage

This treatment would entail the removing of dead and dying trees singly or in groups for sawlogs, specialty products, or fuelwood. Mortality Salvage is proposed in stands or portions of stands where dead and dying trees are found. Dying trees are defined as standing trees that have been severely damaged by forces such as fire, wind, ice, insects, or disease, such that in the judgment of an experienced forest professional or someone technically trained for the work, the trees are likely to die within a few years.

Understory Reduction (Pre-commercial)

Understory Reduction is used to accomplish pre-commercial thinning and fuels reduction treatments for even-aged and uneven-aged conifer stands. Understory reduction consists of cutting small trees (generally less than 8 inches diameter) and vegetation with chainsaws and disposing of the material by hand-piling and burning or use of a lop and scatter method in lighter fuels. Understory reduction increases tree growth rates, and promotes horizontal and vertical structural diversity in stands. Understory reduction is also used in stands where pines and shade-intolerant hardwood species are diminishing in vigor and numbers because of overcrowded stand density conditions. This prescription may be applied to understories and/or areas of high stocking of small trees in commercial stands proposed for harvest.

Enclosure 3

INTEREST RESPONSE FORM

ATTN: Ashland Resource Area Planning
BLM's Nedsbar Forest Management Project
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, Oregon 97504

Please include me on the *Nedsbar Forest Management Project* mailing list:

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY:

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, State Zip Code: _____

Email _____

I prefer to be kept informed via **Email** **Standard mail**

We are trying to save paper and conserve resources. Please respond if you wish to be kept informed; otherwise, you will be taken off the mailing list.