



United States Department of the Interior  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
MEDFORD DISTRICT OFFICE  
ASHLAND RESOURCE AREA



**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**

**For the**

**WAGNER ANDERSON FOREST MANAGEMENT PROJECT**

(DOI-BLM-OR-M060-2010-0014-EA)

This document describes my finding regarding the potential for significant impacts resulting from the implementation of the Wagner Anderson Project, and whether there is a need to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

The Wagner Anderson Project is a forest management action, designed to implement the Bureau of Land Management's 1995 Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (RMP) in the Wagner Anderson Project Area. The overall effects of implementing resource program management, under the Medford District Resource Management Plan, were analyzed and disclosed in the Medford District Proposed Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS) (USDI 1994). The Wagner Anderson EA discloses the site-specific effects of implementing a project designed to meet resource program direction provided by BLM's Resource Management Plan.

The 198-acre Wagner Anderson Project is located on Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-administered lands in the Anderson Creek and Wagner Creek drainages. The legal description for the Wagner Anderson Project area is: T. 39 S., R. 1 W., in Sections 7, 11, 14, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28; W.M., Jackson County, Oregon.

I have considered both context and intensity of the impacts anticipated from the Wagner Anderson Forest Management Project. I have determined that my decision to implement the proposal, as described in this Decision and under the Wagner Anderson Forest Management EA, will not have any significant adverse effects. I considered the following criteria, suggested by CEQ (40 CFR 1508.27), for evaluating intensity or severity of the impact of the Wagner Anderson Project.

The Wagner Anderson Forest Management Project will:

**1. *Not result in significant beneficial or adverse effects***

- Site productivity will be protected by requiring pre-designated skid trails, including the use of existing skid trails where available, resulting in no more than 12 percent of a harvest unit in skid trails (EA p. 3-5). This is consistent with RMP guidelines/Best Management Practices designed to minimize soil productivity losses (USDI 1995, p. 166). Within watersheds analyzed there will be less than one percent increase in compacted area (EA, p. 3-8).
- The nature of the project combined with required Project Design Features will reduce the risk for soil erosion and sedimentation to streams:

- Burn piles associated with fuels treatments would impact soils on only a small percentage (3 to 5 percent) of harvested units; the requirement to burn piles when soil moisture is high minimizes the impact to beneath the burn pile. Exposed soil beneath the burn piles would not move off site as a result of the remaining vegetation and soil cover surrounding the pile burn area (EA p. 3-8).
  - Although the construction of the new roads would result in a slight increase in road densities, the small amount of road construction proposed and the lack of hydrological connectivity, there is very little chance that construction of these roads would impact fisheries or aquatic resources. In the event that sediment generated from construction, use, or maintenance of these short new segments was mobilized during a precipitation event, the roads would shed the water and eroded particulates into downslope vegetation, where it would be filtered and stored before reaching any stream channels (EA, p.3-30).
  - Although haul would have a likelihood of inputting some sediment into aquatic habitats the magnitude of the inputs would be small because dry season haul restrictions would reduce impacts to the road surfaces, and haul routes would be spread over a large spatial scale minimizing the use any one surface would receive.
  - Any introduced sediment will become an immeasurable fraction of the total sediment load and would not be detectable at downstream locations (EA, p. 3-19).
- There is no risk for increased peak flow as the thinning prescriptions maintain canopy covers from 40 to 60 percent and above; vegetation conditions are not considered hydrologically altered until they fall below 30 percent canopy cover (EA p. 3-18).
  - Any increased summer water availability would have little chance of affecting summer low flows, because due to seasonal drought conditions in the analysis area, and harvest prescriptions that leave vegetation on-site (no clear cuts), the remaining vegetation would likely utilize any additional water before it could reach the stream network (EA, p. 3-18 and 3-33).
  - Since no thinning would occur in Riparian Reserves there would be no risk for increasing water temperatures due to timber harvest (EA, p. 3-18).
  - Road reconstruction along road 39-1-14.2 would remove riparian vegetation on one stream crossing; however, there is no risk to increased stream temperatures as this stream is a short-term intermittent and is dry during summer when stream temperatures would be of concern (EA p. 3-35).
  - Known locations of Special Status and Survey and Manage botanical species will be protected by no treatment buffers and/or seasonal restrictions. While the loss of some individuals is possible; protection measures ensure the Wagner Anderson Project will not contribute to the need to list the species as threatened or endangered under the ESA. (See EA Chapter 2, Table 2-5, EA p. 3-46, and attached EA Addendum).
  - With the implementation of Project Design Features (Chapter 2, Alternatives, Project Design Features) the potential for the Wagner Anderson Project to contribute to the spread of noxious weeds will be minimized (EA p. 3-51).
  - A variety of wildlife habitats will remain untreated and unaffected throughout the West Bear Creek Watershed to provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species including species utilizing mature and older forest habitat. The Wagner Anderson Project treats less than 0.4 percent of the West Bear Creek Watershed (EA p. 3-74). Within stands treated silvicultural prescriptions and required Project Design Features help to maintain and promote structural complexity within stands important to northern spotted owls as well as other wildlife species:

- The Wagner Anderson project would enter less than 2.2 percent of existing NRF habitat in the owl analysis area (EA p. 3-61) and would maintain this habitat at 60 percent canopy cover;
  - Only 4.7 percent of existing owl dispersal only habitat would be enter (EA p. 3-61) and will be maintained at 40 percent canopy closure;
  - Required Project Design Features call for maintaining snags where they exist unless felling is required to meet safety requirements for forest workers (EA p. 2-17);
  - While underburning activities could result in the loss of some coarse woody material, it is not targeted for removal and burning when fuel moistures are high would allow for the retention of most coarse woody material while removing small diameter fuels that would otherwise contribute to fire hazard within forest stands.
- Road closures following operations, such as barricades or gates, would help to reduce undesirable human uses in the area such as trash dumping.
  - While fire hazard would increase for the short-term as a result of activity fuels; post harvest fuels treatments would mitigate fire hazard within 1 to 2 years (EA p. 3-80).
  - The Wagner Anderson Project Area is used for dispersed recreation, however, should have no overall adverse affect on recreational opportunities across the project area (EA, p.3-113).
  - While three of the harvest units are visible from the Interstate 5 corridor through the Rogue Valley, the level of change to these 3 units would be weak and should not attract the attention of the casual observer. The thinning prescriptions designed for the Wagner Anderson Project will meet Visual Resource Management objectives for Class III and IV (EA, p.3-113).

**2. *Not result in significant impacts on public health or safety.***

No aspects of the project have been identified as having the potential to significantly and adversely impact public health or safety. On-going fuels reduction on private and federally-managed public lands will result in a beneficial effect of increasing the landscape scale effectiveness of fuels reduction treatments, will have a beneficial impact on public health and safety by reducing the threat of large-scale high intensity wildfires in the analysis area(EA, p.3-84).

Prescribed burning operations will follow all requirements of the Oregon Smoke Management Plan and the Department of Environmental Quality Air Quality and Visibility Protection Program, ensuring that smoke related impacts to public health and safety are mitigated (EA p. 3-114 to 3-117).

**3. *Not result in significant adverse effects on unique characteristics of the geographic area, as none exist.***

No wilderness areas, wilderness study areas, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers (or rivers suitable for wild and scenic designation), caves, parks, refuge lands, or areas of critical environmental concern exist in the Wagner Anderson Project Area.

**4. *Not have highly controversial environmental effects.***

“Highly controversial”, in the context of 40 CFR 1508.27(b) (4), refers to substantial disagreement within the scientific community about the environmental effects of a proposed action. It does not refer to expressions of opposition or expressions of preference among alternatives.

The Wagner Anderson Forest Management project is similar in nature to many other forest management projects that have been implemented within the scope of the Medford District Resource Management Plan across the Medford District. The anticipated effects of harvesting timber, post harvest fuels reduction, and new road construction, documented in the EA, are well known and no highly controversial effects have been identified.

**5. *Not have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or unique or unknown environmental risks.***

The process for estimating the anticipated effects for projects of this nature are well known and the effects of this project have been documented in the environmental assessment (EA, Chapter 3, Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences).

**6. *Not establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.***

The decision to implement the Wagner Anderson Forest Management Project will not set any precedents for future actions with significant effects. The Wagner Anderson Project will implement actions approved for forest management under the 1995 Medford District Resource Management Plan (which incorporated the Northwest Forest Plan) and analyzed under the Medford District Resource Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement. It is therefore consistent with the types of projects envisioned in the BLM Resource Management Plan and Northwest Forest Plan.

**7. *Not result in significant cumulative environmental effects.***

Cumulative environmental effects are “the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions” (See definition of “cumulative impact” in 40 CFR § 1508.7).

Analysis was performed at multiple scales, and included the consideration of past actions, as reflected in current conditions, current actions, and foreseeable future actions on both private and federal lands (EA, Chapter 3, Affected Environment & Environmental Consequences). No significant cumulative impacts were identified outside of those addressed and anticipated in the Final Medford District Proposed Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (1995) and the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl.

The potential for this project to contribute to adverse cumulative effects as a result of the potential for an increase erosion rates from timber harvest would be slight as surface erosion depends primarily on extent and continuity of bare areas. Project design features are required to minimize the disturbance of protective soil cover that helps to hold soil in place or filter exposed soil from moving off-site. Therefore, most disturbed soil particles would remain on site (EA, p. 3-9).

Because the Wagner Anderson project does not reduce canopy cover below critical thresholds or result in appreciable increases in additional ground disturbance, the Wagner Anderson project is not expected to contribute to adverse cumulative watershed effects (EA, p. 3-19).

Because of the relatively small foot-print of the project, and because of the dispersed distribution of proposed treatments across the watershed, no substantial negative effects are anticipated to any Bureau Sensitive or Survey and Manage wildlife species because of the small scope of the proposed action compared to the available habitat in the West Bear Creek Watershed. The implementation of

the Wagner Anderson Project represents less than 0.4 percent of the West Bear Creek Watershed (EA, p. 3-74).

**8. *Have no significant effects on scientific, cultural, or historical resources, including those listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.***

The Wagner Anderson Project area was reviewed for the potential for adverse impacts to cultural resources. The project area was surveyed for cultural resources. All known sites will be avoided; therefore, the Wagner Anderson Project will have no adverse impacts on cultural resources.

This project would not result in restricting access to, and ceremonial use of, Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners or adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites. No sites have been identified in the project area. Executive Order 13007 (Indian Sacred Sites) (EA, p. 3-117).

This project would have no effect on Indian Trust Resources as none exist in the project area. This project was determined to have no adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. This includes Native American religious or cultural sites, archaeological sites, or historic properties. (EA, p. 3-117).

**9. *Have no significant adverse effects on species listed or proposed to be listed as Federally Endangered or Threatened Species, or designated critical habitat for these species.***

The Wagner Anderson project is designed to treat and maintain all existing northern spotted owl nesting, roosting, foraging (NRF), and dispersal only habitat, and would operate within less than 2.2 percent of NRF and about and 4.7 percent of dispersal only habitat within the spotted owl analysis area. The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USDI USFWS 2009) has determined this project will result in a “Not Likely to Adversely Affect” effects determination for the Northern Spotted Owl (USDI 2009) (EA, p.3-61). The Wagner Anderson Project is not located within northern spotted owl designated critical habitat (EA, p. 3-57).

Alternative 2 has been determined to be “May Effect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect (NLAA)” SONC coho salmon, CCH, and EFH. This determination was made based on analysis to fish and aquatic habitat in this EA and the Biological Assessment (BA) prepared for the NMFS for this timber sale. The BLM has initiated informal consultation following the guidelines in Federal Register Section 402.16 (50 CFR Part 402). A June 17, 2010 letter of concurrence from the National Marine Fisheries Service determined the Wagner Anderson Project is Not Likely to Adversely Affect Southern Oregon/Northern California Coasts Coho or their designated critical habitat.

The National Marine Fisheries Service determined, based on the minimal amount of new disturbance in Riparian Reserves (less than 0.1 mile of new road construction and 0.25 mile of road reconstruction), the fact that all other ground disturbance would occur outside of Riparian Reserves, and the application of conservation measures (described in the EA as Project Design Features), that the magnitude of effects to erosion rates from the proposed action are insignificant. Therefore, the effects to SONCC coho and their critical habitat are also insignificant.

Surveys for Special Status plant species and 2001 Survey and Manage species were completed and known sites protected through a combination of no-treatment buffers or seasonal restrictions (EA, p.3-45). While there may be a loss of some individuals, it will not contribute to the need to list the species as threatened or endangered under the ESA.

The Pacific fisher (*Martes pennanti*) was petitioned for listing as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act on December 12, 2000. In 2003 the USFWS released their notice of 90-day petition finding and initiation of status review (68 Federal Register, No. 132, 41169-41174) and in 2004 published their Notice of 12-month petition finding, concluding that listing fishers as threatened was warranted, but was precluded by higher priority listing actions (Federal Register Vol. 69, No. 68, April 8, 2004, 18769-18792). The species remains a USFWS candidate species (USDI, USFWS 2004, 71 Fed. Reg. 53777, Sept. 12, 2006).

The Wagner Anderson project occurs within the estimated home ranges of known fisher, as analyzed in the Biological Evaluation for the Ashland Fire Resiliency EIS (EA, p. 3-58). There are no known denning sites in the project area and project activities are not expected to cause direct mortality to fisher. While timber harvest may have short-term effects to prey species within the units treated, impacts will be short-term and large amount of untreated areas would continue to provide forage habitat. Additionally, treatments would retain key habitat characteristics such as large snags and coarse woody debris. Seasonal restrictions in place for other resources would also benefit fisher by restricting project activities until fisher move young from natal dens and become more mobile. Fishers have large home ranges and would be able to move away from project activities without affecting their ability to forage and disperse within their home range (EA p. 3-65).

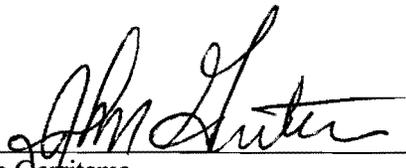
**10. Not Violate a Federal, State, Local, or Tribal law, regulation or policy imposed for the protection of the environment.**

Through analysis documented in the EA, the BLM has determined that with implementation of required Project Design Features, the proposed action would not threaten a violation of any federal, state, or local environmental protection laws.

This project was reviewed for the potential for disproportionately high or adverse effects on minority or low income populations; no adverse impacts to minority or low income populations will occur (*Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice)* (EA p. 40).

**FINDING**

I have determined the Wagner Anderson Forest Management project does not constitute a major Federal action having a significant effect on the human environment; an environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared. This conclusion is based on my consideration of the Council on Environmental Quality's criteria for significance (40 CFR § 1508.27), with regard to context and intensity of the impacts described in the EA, my understanding of the project, review of project analysis, and review of public comments. The analysis of effects documented in the EA has been completed within the context of multiple spatial and temporal scales and within the context of the Medford District Resource Management Plan and the Northwest Forest Plan. The anticipated effects are within the scope, type, and magnitude of effects anticipated and analyzed in those plans.

  
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John Gerritsma  
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Medford District, Bureau of Land Management

8/12/10  
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Date

## REFERENCES

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