



United States Department of the Interior

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



IN REPLY REFER TO:
1792 (OR-115)

OCT 15 2007

Dear Sir or Madam:

I would like to take this opportunity to inform you of possible land management activities that may occur near your neighborhood. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is beginning the analysis process for the Evans Creek Forest Management Project located in the Evans Creek and Rogue Sardine watersheds. The area being considered is located north of the towns of Rogue River and Gold Hill in Township 32 South, Ranges 2 West and 4 West; Township 33 South, Ranges 2 West, 3 West, and 4 West; Township 34 South, Ranges 2 West, 3 West, and 4 West; Township 35 South, Ranges 3 West, 4 West, and 5 West; and Township 36 South, Ranges 4 West and 5 West (see Map).

The BLM has incorporated the following previously proposed forest management projects into the Evans Creek Forest Management Project: Pleasant Fry, Slick Sand, and Musty Sardines. Since these previously proposed projects were all located within the Evans Creek watershed, I have decided to include these projects in order to provide a more thorough analysis of possible impacts in the Evans Creek watershed.

Why is the BLM developing the Evans Creek Forest Management Project?

The Oregon and California Railroad and Coos Bay Wagon Road Grant Lands Act of 1937 (O&C Act) governs a portion of the BLM-administered lands in the Evans Creek and Rogue Sardine watersheds. This act directs the primary purpose for management of these lands to be sustainable timber production. The Medford District 1995 Resource Management Plan (RMP) incorporates the mandate for O&C lands and allocates public lands in the Evans Creek and Rogue Sardine watersheds for timber production. Timber products resulting from forest management activities are to be sold in support of the Medford District's Allowable Sale Quantity to meet Timber Resource Objectives identified in the Medford District RMP (p.17, 72-73).

The BLM has developed a preliminary forest management proposal to meet the following objectives: provide forest products, improve conifer forest vigor and growth, reduce individual tree mortality, and improve hazardous fuels conditions adjacent to private residential lands.

What is the BLM Proposing?

The BLM is considering timber harvest on approximately 3,420 acres, hazardous fuels reduction on 6,100 acres, 1,000 acres of stand improvement and riparian habitat and stream restoration on 12 miles of stream. I anticipate the number of acres and miles of stream being considered for this project will be reduced as the project is further developed.

The proposed timber harvest includes using a combination of silvicultural prescriptions in selected forest stands to meet the objectives described above. These prescriptions tailor management practices to the topography of and the long-term goals for each forest stand type found in the project area. Management of these forest stands would be accomplished through three or more commercial timber sales. Three methods for the removal of commercial timber are proposed: tractor/ground-based systems, cable/skyline systems, and helicopter. A brief summary of silvicultural prescriptions and yarding methods is included in Attachment 1. The slash generated from timber harvest will be treated to further reduce hazardous fuels.

Forest management projects would include road work such as renovation, improvement, construction, and closure.

Watershed Analysis documents have been completed for the Mid-Evans Creek (1994), West Evans Creek (1995), East Evans Creek (1996), and Lower Evans Creek (1995) portions of the Evans Creek watershed. Recommendations from the Watershed Analysis documents will be considered in developing the proposed projects. The BLM has not completed watershed analysis for the Pleasant Creek watershed (located within the Evans Creek watershed) and the Rogue Sardine watershed.

What Happens Next?

The BLM will prepare extensive written documentation of the project proposals and the environmental effects. This will be distributed to the public through an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Evans Creek Forest Management Project. At this time, we would like to hear any comments, issues, and concerns you have that would help shape or further develop the project proposals.

We recognize that people place a wide range of values on resources and resource use on public lands. Opinions agreeing or disagreeing with current laws and policies are not helpful in refining the proposed action. Comments clearly expressing site-specific issues or concerns are the most helpful. We are contacting you at this time so your concerns or ideas can be considered early in the development of the project proposal. Your initial comments will be most useful if they are received by November 2, 2007. However, comments will be accepted and reviewed up until the time a decision on the project is made.

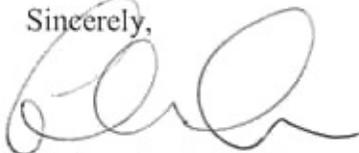
Please send your written comments to Bureau of Land Management, Medford District, Butte Falls Resource Area, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, Oregon 97504. If you would like to be kept informed about this project, please complete and return the attached "Interest Response Form" and you will be placed on the mailing list.

Pursuant to 7 CFR Part 1, Subpart B, Section 1.27, all written submissions in response to this notice will be made available for public inspection, including the submitter's name and address, unless the submitter specifically requests confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses submitted on official letterheads and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of

organizations or businesses will be made available for public inspection in their entirety.

This is not the only opportunity you will have to comment on this project. When the Evans Creek Forest Management Project EA has been prepared and distributed, you will have an opportunity to make further comments. If interest is sufficient, BLM may also hold a field trip to the project area. For more information concerning the Evans Creek Forest Management Project, you may contact Jean Williams at (541) 618-2385 or John Bergin at (541) 618-2265.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. McAlear', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Christopher J. McAlear
Field Manager
Butte Falls Resource Area

3 Attachments:

- 1 – Evans Creek Forest Management Silvicultural Prescriptions (2 pp)
- 2 – Interest Response Form (1 p)
- 3 – Map (1 p)

Attachment 1: Evans Creek Forest Management Silvicultural Prescriptions and Yarding Methods

Proposed Silvicultural Prescriptions

Proposed Forest Management Treatments for Conifer Forests in the Evans Creek Project Area	
Proposed Treatment	Acres
Commercial Thinning	900
Connectivity Block Regeneration	170
Northern General Forest Management Area Regeneration (NGFMA)	1,100
Southern General Forest Management Area Regeneration (SGFMA)	875
Selection Harvest	125
Riparian Reserve Thinning	250
Total	3,420

Commercial Thinning – 900 Acres

Commercial thinning is used to control stand density, maintain stand vigor, and encourage the development of desired stand characteristics in the future. Commercial thinning would occur after stands reach an economical combination of tree diameters and surplus volume. This treatment targets the removal of individual trees to maintain or enhance forest growth and diversity. Removal of smaller trees and trees in direct competition with healthy dominant and codominant trees would redirect the site resources (water, sunlight, nutrients, and growing space) toward the development and maintenance of large healthy trees. Canopy closure of trees greater than 8" diameter breast height (DBH) would range from 40 to 60 percent following treatment. Depending on logging slash amounts, slash would be either lopped and scattered or piled and burned.

Regeneration Harvest – 2,145 Acres

To maximize volume growth and yield and to reestablish favored tree species, regeneration harvests are applied in older forest stands. Regeneration harvesting would generally occur in stands 100 years of age or older. In Connectivity Blocks, regeneration harvests would be applied in stands 150 years of age or older.

Three regeneration silvicultural methods are proposed for implementation: Structural Retention (SGFMA), Modified Even-aged (NGFMA), and Modified Even-aged in a Connectivity Block. The target stand conditions for each of these methods are similar, except for the number of trees greater than 20" DBH left and the remaining canopy closure.

<i>Regeneration Method</i>	<i>Remaining Trees greater than 20" DBH</i>	<i>Percent Canopy Closure</i>
SGFMA	16-25	25-40
NGFMA	6-8	10-15
Connectivity Block	12-18	20-30

Retained trees would be the most vigorous and would be selected based on tree crown ratio and form. Spatial distribution of these trees would vary from individual trees to groups. Healthy understory ponderosa pine, sugar pine, incense cedar, and Douglas-fir trees less than 8" DBH and free of insects,

disease, or damage would be left. Wildlife snags and coarse woody debris would not be removed. All other trees would be removed. Slash would be underburned or piled and burned. Conifer seedlings would be planted following harvest.

Selection Harvest - 125 Acres

Selection harvest is used to reduce stand densities, remove low vigor trees, and leave a fully stocked healthy stand. Trees are harvested across all diameter classes with the harvest criteria based on density levels, target stocking levels, and risk factors of individual trees. Canopy closure of trees greater than 8" DBH would range from 40 to 60 percent following harvest. Depending on logging slash amounts, slash would be either lopped and scattered or piled and burned.

Riparian Reserve Thinning - 250 Acres

To reduce stand densities and to enhance and accelerate the production of large diameter conifers in Riparian Reserves, smaller trees and trees in direct competition with healthy dominant and codominant trees would be removed. Reducing stand densities would redirect the site resources (water, sunlight, nutrients, and growing space) toward the development and maintenance of large healthy trees. Canopy closure of trees greater than 8" diameter breast height (DBH) would range from 40 to 60 percent following treatment. Depending on logging slash amounts, slash would be either lopped and scattered or piled and burned.

Timber Harvest Yarding Methods

Trees harvested as a result of the forest stand prescriptions described above would be moved, or yarded, from the forest stands to a landing (a central area where logs are gathered for further transport). A combination of skyline cable, tractor, and helicopter yarding methods would be used in this project.

Proposed Timber Harvest Yarding Methods	
	Acres
Skyline Cable Yarding	1,650
Tractor Yarding	350
Helicopter Yarding	1,300
Total	3,300

Skyline Cable Yarding: drags trees by cable with one end suspended and one end on the ground, up the slope to a landing area on or near a road. This results in narrow, parallel yarding corridors about every 150 feet throughout the harvest unit. Corridors are about 9 to 15 feet wide, depending on the size of trees removed and the terrain. The locations of the corridors are approved by the BLM sale administrator and are designated before harvest begins. Cut trees are dragged from the place they are cut to the yarding corridor.

Tractor Yarding: uses tractors to drag trees to landing locations. Tractor yarding only occurs on lands with less than 35 percent slopes. This method requires narrow skid trails (about 9 to 12 feet wide). Skid trail locations are approximately 150 feet apart, but may vary depending on site-specific terrain. The skid trails are located before harvest begins and the locations are preapproved by the BLM sale administrator.

Helicopter Yarding: lifts trees bunched together by a cable, moving the trees from the harvest unit to a landing area near a road. Helicopter yarding allows for full suspension of the trees from the harvest unit to the landing area and does not create skid trails or corridors. Helicopter yarding eliminates the need to build roads within the harvest area. The objective is to minimize surface disturbance in high risk watersheds. Existing helicopter landings would be used whenever possible. Landings would not exceed one acre in size.

Attachment 2

Interest Response Form

Please include me on the mailing list for the Evans Creek Forest Management Project (as described in the attached letter).

Complete this form and return to:

Bureau of Land Management
Attn: Butte Falls Resource Area Planning
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, OR 97504

Please Print Clearly:

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Yes, I'm interested in participating in a field trip.

We are trying to save paper and conserve resources. Please respond if you wish to be kept informed and receive future mailings for this project.

