

**Decision Record & Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)**  
**for**  
**Five Rogues Hazardous Fuels Treatment**  
**EA #OR-118-04-019**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The proposed Five Rogues Hazardous Fuels Treatment units were analyzed under the Five Rogues Project environmental assessment (EA). The legal notice for public comment on the EA was placed in Grants Pass Courier on May 25, 2004 and the Big News, which is a newsletter for residents of the communities of Sunny Valley and Wolf Creek. The public comment period ran from May 25 through July 23, 2004. The EA analyzed various forest management treatments such as timber harvesting, small wood utilization, road work and hazardous fuels treatments. Hazardous fuels treatments include high levels of brush, hardwoods and small diameter conifers. **This Decision Record applies only to hazardous fuels units that are not associated with commercial timber harvesting.** There will be one or more separate decision documents describing my alternative selection for commercial timber harvesting and other forest management treatments.

## **I. DECISION**

I have decided to implement the fuels treatments and associated maintenance underburns proposed under Alternative 4, and all associated project design features, described in the Five Rogues Project environmental assessment (EA pp. 7-15). These units are listed as an attachment to this Decision. Fuels treatments include slashing, handpiling and pile burning small-diameter conifers, hardwoods, and shrub species to reduce the hazard for high-intensity wildfires. Dense areas of conifers, under 7" diameter at breast height (DBH), would be thinned to various spacing (between 10 and 20 feet) leaving a mosaic of scattered groups of conifers. Mechanical and manual thinning and slashing treatments could occur year-round. The slash from these operations would be hand piled and burned during the wet season. The majority of cut shrubs and hardwoods, such as madrone, are expected to re-sprout. Treatments within riparian reserves include slashing and hand piling and burning of conifers, brush and hardwoods less than 7" (inches) DBH and will not occur within 25' (feet) of streams.

The following units under Alternative 4 are deferred from commercial timber harvest but will be treated for fuels hazard reduction: 1S-3, 1S-5, 3-1, 13S-3, 31-3 (combined 31-3, 31-4) and 33-13. Fuels treatments will be the same as above and would not occur within 25' (feet) of streams. These modifications were reviewed by the IDT and were found to be within the effects analyzed in the EA.

## **II. RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION**

This action meets the purpose and need, as identified in the EA, for fuels hazard reduction.

Slashing, handpiling and pile burning small-diameter conifers, hardwoods, and shrub species on approximately 475 acres to reduce the high risk to high-intensity wildfire best meets the need of the proposal. The No-Action Alternative was not selected because it did not meet the identified purpose and need of reducing fuels hazards in the area. The fuels reduction proposals in alternative 2 and 3 are similar to Alternative 4 because no relevant issues emerged from the interdisciplinary team and from public scoping.

The majority of public comments to the Five Rogues Project environmental assessment were in regard to timber harvesting. The Sierra Club commented that they support “prescribed burning” and “small diameter treatments.” Klamath Siskiyou Wildlands Center (KS Wild) also commented on support for these types of activities.

Fuels projects intend to reduce hazardous fuels within the wildland urban interface, reduce hazardous fuel reduction within the remaining planning area, reduce the potential risk of catastrophic fire and create defensible space for fire suppression efforts. Urban interface treatments will reduce the high risk to wildfire near residences. Ladder fuels reduction will reduce the vertical fuel ladders and overstocked conditions within the watershed. Defensible space would provide a safer environment in which to rapidly deploy personnel and equipment in the event of a wildfire.

This decision is consistent with the *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (1994) and *Record of Decision for the Medford District Bureau of Land Management* (RMP), April 14, 1995 as amended.

### **III. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)**

Based on the effects discussed in the Five Rogues Project environmental assessment (EA), I have determined that the fuels treatments portion of Alternative 4, which I have selected, is not a major federal action and would not significantly affect the quality of the human environment, individually or cumulatively with other actions in the general area. No environmental effects meet the definition of significance in context or intensity as defined in 40 CFR § 1508.27. Therefore an environmental impact statement is not needed. This finding is based on the following discussion.

**Context.** The selected Alternative is a site specific action of treating approximately 475 acres of BLM administered lands within the Five Rogues Project Area. The project lies within Essential Fish Habitat for coho and chinook salmon and within the Grave Creek 5<sup>th</sup> field watershed. The discussion of the significance criteria that follows applies to the intended action and is within the context of local importance. Chapter 4 of the EA details the effects of the selected Alternative. None of the effects identified, including direct, indirect and cumulative effects are considered to be significant and do not exceed those effects described in the *Final Medford District Proposed*

*Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (1995).*

**Intensity.** The following discussion is organized around the ten criteria for Significance described under 40 CFR §1508.27 (b).

- 1. Impacts that may be both beneficial and adverse.** Implementing the selected alternative would treat fuels within the wildland urban interface, reduce hazardous fuels and create defensible space for fire suppression efforts. Fuels treatments would reduce the vertical fuel ladders and overstocked conditions which can increase the risk of loss of late-successional habitat. There are no anticipated measurable effects on watershed hydrology, soil erosion or stream sedimentation while implementing project design features. Pile and burn or broadcast burning would reduce the amount of organic litter but not destroy the organic (decomposed and usually wet) horizon when burn guidelines are implemented as planned. Site productivity is anticipated to be maintained in the long term. None of the environmental effects identified in chapter 4 of the EA are considered significant or outside the effects described in the *Final Medford District Proposed Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (1995)*.
- 2. The degree to which the selected alternative will affect public health or safety.** Public health and safety would not be affected. The selected Alternative is comparable to other fuels hazards treatment projects which have occurred within the Glendale Resource Area with no substantive health or safety concerns outside of Resource Management Plan (RMP) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines.
- 3. Unique characteristics of the geographic area such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There are no park lands, prime farm lands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers or ecologically critical areas within the Planning Area. Surveys for cultural and historical sites were completed and the project archaeologist provided appropriate protection design features as identified in the EA.
- 4. The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The effects of the selected alternative are described in Chapter 4 of the EA and the interdisciplinary team did not identify effects that are likely to be highly controversial that have not been identified within the Northwest Forest Plan or Medford Resource Management Plan.
- 5. The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The selected Alternative is not unique or unusual. The Glendale Resource Area has implemented similar projects in the past and has found effects to be reasonably predictable.

- 6. The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects or represents a decision in principle about future considerations.**  
The selected Alternative does not set a precedent for future actions that might have significant effects nor does it represent a decision in principle about future consideration. Any future projects would be evaluated through the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) process and would stand on their own as to environmental effects.
- 7. Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** Significant cumulative effects were not anticipated in the EA and effects are within those anticipated in the Medford RMP. A complete disclosure of the effects of the selected Alternative is contained in Chapter 4 of the EA.
- 8. The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the national Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The selected Alternative would not adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or other objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, nor would the selected alternative cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.
- 9. The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** There is one northern spotted owl Critical Habitat Unit (#OR-32) in the eastern sector of the Planning Area, which would be affected by the selected Alternative. Delay of project activities would occur if hatching year (fledgling) spotted owls are known or suspected within or immediately adjacent to a unit. As stated in the EA (p. 10), broadcast burning (for site preparation) will not take place within 0.25 mile of known active northern spotted owl nests between March 1 and June 30 (or until two weeks after the fledging period). The EA mentions that “fuels treatments would reduce the vertical fuel ladders and overstocked conditions which can increase the risk of loss of late-successional habitat (EA p. 51).

Prescribed fire treatments were consulted programmatically with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under the 2003 Biological Opinion and comply with the Terms and Conditions (log# 1-14-03-F-511 p.108). Alternative 4 prescribed treatments, with specific Project design Features (EA pp. 7,8,11,12), would have no adverse affect to the listed Southern Oregon /Northern California coho salmon.

- 10. Whether the action threatens a violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements**

**imposed for the protection of the environment.** The selected Alternative does not violate any known Federal, State, or local law requirement imposed for the protection of the environment. Furthermore, the selected Alternative is consistent with applicable land management plans, policies, and programs.

**PROTEST PROVISIONS**

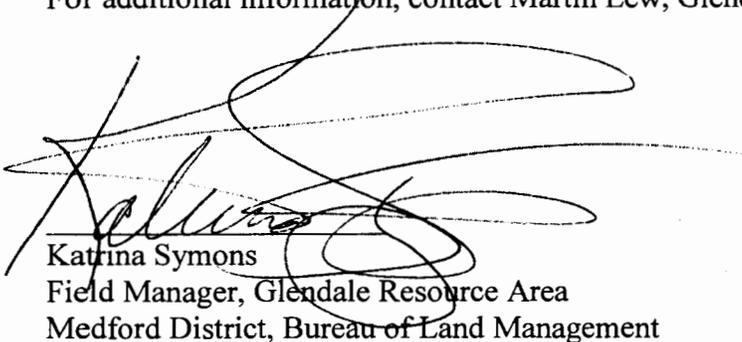
This decision is subject to protest by the public. To protest this decision, a person must submit a written protest to the Glendale Field Manager, 200 NE Greenfield Road, Grants Pass, OR 97526 by the end of business on February 22, 2005 (4:00 P.M.). The protest should clearly state the reasons why the decision is believed to be in error.

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

If no protest is received by the close of business on February 22, 2005 (4:00 P.M.), the decision will become final and will be implemented immediately. If a timely protest is received, the decision will be reconsidered in light of the statement of reasons for the protest and other pertinent information available, and a final decision will be issued to the protesting party in accordance with CFR 5003.3.

**CONTACT PERSON**

For additional information, contact Martin Lew, Glendale Resource Area at 541-618-2487.



Katrina Symons  
Field Manager, Glendale Resource Area  
Medford District, Bureau of Land Management

2/2/05  
Date

### Summary of Fuels Treatments

Proposed Fuel Treatment for the Five Rogues Project					
Unit Number	EA Acres	Modified Acres	Type of Treatment		
			Slashing	Hand Pile	Pile Burn
1S-2	15	15	X	X	X
1S-3	17	21	X	X	X
1S-5	16	14	X	X	X
1S-6	17	20	X	X	X
3-1	30	30	X	X	X
13S-3	35	38	X	X	X
15S-1	151	168	X	X	X
31-2	38	37	X	X	X
31-3	15	32	X	X	X
33-1	9	12	X	X	X
33-2	3	5	X	X	X
33-11	10	11	X	X	X
33-13	17	27	X	X	X
33-14	23	27	X	X	X
35-9	15	18	X	X	X
<b>Total Acres</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>475</b>			