



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
GRANTS PASS INTERAGENCY OFFICE
2164 NE SPALDING AVE
GRANTS PASS, OREGON 97526

**FUEL HAZARD REDUCTION ON NON-FEDERAL LANDS
IN THE
WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE IN THE SOUTH ILLINOIS VALLEY AREA**
Community Assistance Agreement with the Illinois Valley Community Development
Organization
CE # OR 117-08-37

I. Purpose and Need for the Action

A. Proposed Action Title / Type: Defensible Space and Escape Route enhancement on private property via the National Fire Plan (NFP). Funding in the Pacific Northwest is intended to support strategic community fire planning in high-risk areas and to cost-share forest products utilization and marketing projects and demonstrations that explore value-added uses for small diameter wood. Funding is available from the BLM as part of the Wildland Urban Interface Fuels program to implement projects on non-federal lands for reducing hazardous fuels that may threaten communities and critical ecosystems within the wildland urban interface. This project is within the designated Illinois Valley Community at Risk as defined by Federal Register / Vol. 66, No. 160 / August 17, 2001.

B. Location: Private property in the southern portion of the Illinois Valley. The project area boundary extends from the Oregon/California border the city of Cave Junction and west of Highway 99 to east of Rockydale Road. The town of O'Brien is near the center of this project area. See map.

Land Use Allocation: Private Property

C. Need / Rationale for the Proposed Action: The purpose of the project is to reduce forest fuels to provide better protection of life and residential property from wildland fire and to reduce the potential risk to adjacent federal lands from fire originating on the private lands. The goal of the project is to provide defensible space treatments around homes, along roads and driveways and in areas strategic to the protection of rural residences. Past fire exclusion on these lands has resulted in the increased fuel hazard (high hazard).

The Illinois Valley Community Development Organization (IVCDO) submitted this project as a National Fire Plan Wildland Urban Interface Fuels Project in 2007 and will administer it. The Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan Risk and Fuels Reduction committee planned and approved the project.

D. Description of the Proposed Action: The proposed action is to reduce fuel loads using handtools, chainsaws, ATV's, trucks, and chippers on approximately 200 acres of private

property. Small trees and brush would be thinned, and trees would be limbed to reduce ladder fuels. Slash would be hand piled, covered and burned, lopped and scattered, or removed from the sites. Biomass removal would be encouraged on this project and some would be used to produce power at the Rough and Ready co-generation facility near O'Brien, Oregon. The IVCDO would administer the funds and arrange contractors. The intensity and nature of the treatments could vary moderately based on individual landowner preference but would be consistent with the following project design features:

- Trees and other vegetation thinned / cut would be less than 12" DBH.
- Residual hardwood and conifer trees would be spaced approximately 14' by 30'.
- Thinning would be limited to 100' around structures.
- Thinning along roads would be limited to 30' from road bed edge. Conifers would be limbed from six to fourteen feet high.
- No vegetation would be cut within 50' any stream.
- Burning would occur in the most disturbed areas only.
- No herbicides would be used.
- Mechanized equipment off established roads would include chain saws and ATV's. Vehicles and heavy equipment would remain on established roads.
- Permittee is responsible for complying with all ODF fire restrictions and fire prevention requirements including obtaining any permits required by ODF. All chainsaws and mechanized equipment must meet Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) standards.
- Cultural or historical sites would be avoided. If any previously unidentified cultural resources are located during project implementation, the area will be avoided until a cultural resource person can determine the sites significance.
- Every reasonable measure must be taken to avoid spreading noxious weeds.
- Public roads and trails will remain open and unobstructed.
- Survey markers and property corners will be protected against destruction, obliteration, modification, or damage during operations.
- Work would be completed within five years of issuance of the grant.

Port-Orford-Cedar (POC) guidelines would be employed if POC is found in the project area.

II. Plan Conformance

The proposed action is in conformance with the following plans:

- (1) *Final EIS and Record of Decision for the Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP) (June 1995).*
- (2) *Final Supplemental EIS on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (February 1994).*
- (3) *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and its attachment A entitled the Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl (NFP)(April 1994).*
- (4) *Final Supplemental EIS for Amendments to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (March 2000), and the Record of Decision and Standards and Guidelines for Amendment to the Survey & Manage, Protection Buffer, and other Mitigation Measures Standards and Guidelines (January 2001)*

- (5) *Record of Decision to Remove the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines in Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Plans within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl.* (July 2007)
- (6) *Medford District Noxious Weed Environmental Assessment* (April 1998).
- (7) *Final Supplemental EIS for Management of Port-Orford Cedar in Southwest Oregon* (December 2003)
- (8) *Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan* (November 2004).

III. Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act

The proposed action qualifies as a categorically excluded action under the following Department of the Interior categorical exclusion: (Department Manual 516 DM 11.9):

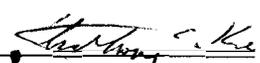
D. Rangeland Management

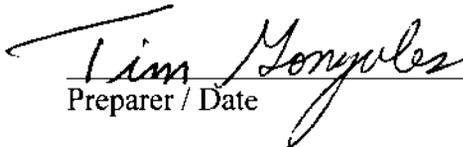
(10) Vegetation management activities, such as seeding, planting, invasive plant removal, installation of erosion control devices (e.g., mats/ straw/chips), and mechanical treatments, such as crushing, piling, thinning, pruning, cutting, chipping, mulching, mowing, and prescribed fire when the activity is necessary for the management of vegetation on public lands.

Such activities:

- (a) Shall not exceed 4,500 acres per prescribed fire project and 1,000 acres for other vegetation management projects;*
- (b) Shall not be conducted in Wilderness areas or Wilderness Study Areas;*
- (c) Shall not include the use of herbicides, pesticides, biological treatments or the construction of new permanent roads or other new permanent infrastructure;*
- (d) May include temporary roads which are defined as roads authorized by contract, permit, lease, other written authorization, or emergency operation not intended to be part of the BLM transportation system and not necessary for long-term resource management. Temporary roads shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources; and*
- (e) Shall require the treatment of temporary roads constructed or used so as to permit the reestablishment, by artificial or natural means, of vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover was disturbed by the construction or use of the road, as necessary to minimize erosion from the disturbed area. Such treatment shall be designed to reestablish vegetative cover as soon as practicable, but at least within 10 years after the termination of the contract.*

The proposed action has been reviewed to determine if extraordinary circumstances exist that would require further environmental analysis and documentation (516 DM 2, Appendix 2). None have been identified (see attached).

 = 8/11/08
NEPA Reviewer / Date

 8-6-08
Preparer / Date

IV. Persons and Agencies Consulted

This project has been reviewed by members of the Josephine County Fire Plan group. Key collaborators in the design and preparation of this project are Josephine County, Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Rural Metro Fire Department, and the Illinois Valley Fire Department.

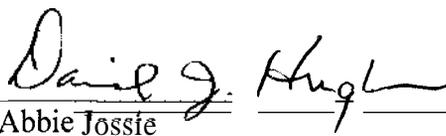
V. Implementation Date

This project will be implemented immediately as outlined above and as consistent with Oregon Department of Forestry fire closures.

VI. Decision and Rationale

It is my decision to implement the South Illinois Valley Hazardous Fuel Reduction project, as described.

I have reviewed the plan conformance statement and have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the approved land use plan. No further environmental analysis is required.


for Abbie Jossie
Field Manager
Grants Pass Resource Area

8/12/08
Date

VII. Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

Administrative remedies may be available to persons who believe that they will be adversely affected by this decision. Persons wishing to seek administrative recourse must do so in accordance with BLM regulations and the procedures and requirements of 43 CFR § 5003 - Administrative Remedies and 43 CFR Subtitle A, Part 4, Subpart E, both as modified by the Federal Register Notice on June 5, 2003 (Vol. 68, No. 108).

This wildfire management decision is issued under 43 CFR Part 5003.1 and will be effective immediately. The BLM has made the determination that vegetation, soil, or other resources on the public lands are at substantial risk of wildfire due to drought, fuels accumulation, or other reasons, or are at immediate risk of erosion or other damage due to wildfire. The BLM has determined that the hazardous fuel buildup in the project area and the consequent substantial risk of wildfire to nearby residents call for expeditious implementation of this decision to facilitate the preparation of hazardous fuel reduction work (43 CFR § 5003.1(b)). Notwithstanding the provisions of 43 CFR 4.21(a)(1), filing a notice of appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 does not automatically suspend the effect of the decision. The Interior Board of Land Appeals will, however, decide an appeal within 60 days after all pleadings have been filed, and within 180 days after the appeal is filed (43 CFR § 4.416). Any contest of this decision should state specifically which portion or element of the decision is being protested and cite the applicable CFR regulations.

VIII. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this decision contact Tim Gonzales, project leader, at (541) 471-6643.

**NEPA COMPLIANCE
CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION REVIEW
CE #OR117-08-37
SOUTH ILLINOIS HAZARDOUS FUEL REDUCTION PROJECT
Community Assistance Agreement with the Illinois Valley Community Development
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The Department of the Interior Manual 516 2.3A (3) requires the review of the following “extraordinary circumstances” (516 DM 2 Appendix 2) to determine if an otherwise categorically excluded action would require additional analysis and environmental documentation.

1) *Have significant impacts on public health or safety.*

Yes No

2) *Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.*

Yes No

3) *Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].*

Yes No

4) *Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.*

Yes No

5) *Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.*

Yes No

6) *Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.*

Yes No

7) *Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.*

Yes No

8) Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.

Yes No

9) Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.

Yes No

10) Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

Yes No

11) Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).

Yes No

12) Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).

Yes No

Reviewer(s):

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8-6-08

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Botanist

8/7/08

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