



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Grants Pass Resource Area
2164 N.E. Spalding
Grants Pass, Oregon 97526

IN REPLY REFER TO
1790 (ORM070)

FEB 07 2013

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Grants Pass Resource Area, is inviting you to participate in the development of the proposed Lower Graves Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) Project. This project will consider timber harvesting and fuels treatments east of the town of Sunny Valley in Township 33 South, Ranges 5 West and 6 West; Township 34 South, Ranges 4 West, 5 West and 6 West (see enclosed map). The proposed project will be analyzed in the Lower Graves IVM Environmental Assessment.

The Lower Graves Planning Area is 10,625 acres located within the Graves Creek Watershed. The Planning Area consists of 9,514 acres in the North General Forest Management Area (NGFMA) land use allocation (LUA), 611 acres within the Southern General Forest Management LUA and 500 acres of Connectivity Diversity Block LUA.

The Lower Graves Planning Area occurs within the northern spotted owl Revised Critical Habitat (2012) with about 54% of proposed forest management activities occurring in either subunit KLE-2 or KLE-3. The KLE-2 and KLE-3 subunits are expected to function primarily for east-west connectivity between subunits and critical habitat units, but also for demographic support. These subunits facilitate northern spotted owl movement between the western Cascades and Coastal Oregon and the Klamath Mountains.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) evaluation of sites known to be occupied at the time of listing indicates that these subunits were occupied at the time of listing. The USFWS has determined that all of the unoccupied and likely occupied areas in these subunits are essential for the conservation of the species to meet the recovery criterion that calls for the continued maintenance and recruitment of northern spotted owl habitat (USFWS 2011, p. ix). The increase and enhancement of northern spotted owl habitat is necessary to provide for viable populations of northern spotted owls over the long term by providing for population growth, successful dispersal, and buffering from competition with the barred owl.

The BLM will complete consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Lower Graves IVM Project. Proposed treatment units will be evaluated for active forest management and will consider fire risk and fire resiliency.

Objectives in northern spotted owl (NSO) habitat:

- Maintain/Improve nesting, roosting, and foraging habitat within critical habitat units and in occupied northern spotted owl sites.

- Improve northern spotted owl dispersal habitat in critical habitat units and northern spotted owl sites.

Objectives in Matrix land use allocation outside of northern spotted owl sites and critical habitat units:

- Improve forest vigor and health
- Provide timber and other forest products
- Assist in meeting Allowable Sale Quantity (ASQ) for timber production

The BLM is proposing to evaluate 1,922 acres for forest management activities. Depending on the alternative chosen, silviculture treatments could include a combination of commercial thinning, variable density thinning, regeneration harvest, restoration thinning, density management/stewardship, and hazardous fuels reduction. Forest management activities could occur in Riparian Reserves but would retain 50-60% canopy cover (See attached proposal for more information).

Harvest trees would be removed using tractor/ground based, cable/skyline, or helicopter yarding methods. Activity fuels resulting from harvest activities would be treated by under burning, piling and burning, removing biomass, or lop and scatter. Road reconstruction, temporary route construction, road maintenance and permanent road construction are being considered to access tree harvest units and to facilitate tree/biomass removal. The proposal also includes related road work such as road closures and road decommissioning to maintain or improve aquatic and watershed conditions. The number of acres and miles of road being considered for this project will be refined as this project develops (See attached proposal for more information).

We are requesting comments regarding issues and concerns you may have that will help shape or further develop this project. We recognize that people place a wide range of values on forest resources and resource use on public lands. Opinions agreeing or disagreeing with current laws and policies are not helpful in refining the proposed action. Your comments will be most useful for alternative development if they are received by March 13, 2013. However, we appreciate your comments and they will be accepted and reviewed up until a decision document on the project is issued.

Please submit your comments to the Grants Pass Resource Area Field Office, 2164 NE Spalding Ave., Grants Pass, Oregon 97526 (Attention: Ferris Fisher) or email your comments to blm_or_md_mail@blm.gov

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment -- including your personal identifying information -- may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. *We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, available for public disclosure in their entirety.*

This is not the only opportunity you will have to comment on this project. There is an opportunity for a public meeting followed by a field trip on February 23, 2013. Further information will be provided for the public meeting and field trip to those who express an interest. The BLM is preparing extensive written documentation of the project proposal and the possible environmental effects. This documentation will be distributed to the public in the Lower Graves Integrated Vegetation

Management (IVM) Project Environmental Assessment (EA). When the EA has been prepared and distributed you will have an opportunity to make further comments. If you would like to be informed on the Lower Graves Integrated Vegetation Management Project please state this prominently at the beginning of your comment letter. Those that choose not to respond to this letter will be removed from further mailings regarding this project.

For additional information concerning this project, contact Ferris Fisher at 541-471-6639. Thank you for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'A. Bollschweiler', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Allen Bollschweiler
Field Manager
Grants Pass Resource Area

Proposed silviculture prescriptions to be analyzed in the Lower Graves environmental assessment (1,922 acres)

Commercial thinning (~499 acres):

- In previously entered plantations to enhance stand growth, quality and vigor

Variable density thinning (~800 acres):

- In heterogeneous stands (mixed species and several ages)
- Canopy cover retention varying from 40 to 60%
- Potential gap openings of ¼ to 2 acres
- Skips of 10 to 15% of the management unit (including the Riparian Reserves)

Regeneration harvest (~120 acres):

- Adhere to the Medford District Resource Management Plan prescription of 6-8 trees per acre in the North General Forest Management Area
- No regeneration harvests are proposed in South General Forest Management land use allocation.

Riparian thinning

- Riparian Reserves would be thinned to improve stand vigor
- Treatments would be in compliance with the Aquatic Conservation Strategy objectives.
- Riparian Reserves would retain a minimum of 50% to 60% canopy cover.

Restoration thinning (~66 acres):

- Reduce stand density, increase vigor and reduce mortality

Density management (~175 acres):

- Reduce stocking level to maintain or enhance forest health, stand structure and function

Hazardous fuels reduction (~262 acres):

- Thinning up to 8 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) for conifer species and 4 inches dbh for hardwood species
- Biomass extraction based upon economic feasibility
- Hand piling, hand pile & burn, or under burning
- Treatments could occur within Ecological Protection Zones (EPZ) but would remain 25 feet from stream channels on either side. Canopy cover retention would not be altered within the EPZ.

Summary of proposed road work to be analyzed in the Lower Graves environmental assessment

Road Reconstruction (~0.70 miles)

- Restores an existing road to the original modified condition
- Decommissioned after harvest and activity fuels are treated

Temporary Route Construction (~1.44 miles)

- Facilitate removal of commercial products and biomass
- Not part of permanent or designated transportation network system
- Decommissioned after use as close to possible to pre-treatment conditions
- Temporary routes decommissioned by ripping, mulching, and seeding
- Barricaded after use

Road Maintenance (~0.08 miles)

- Occur on existing roads to keep the original design standards
- Includes: road blading, reshaping, spot rocking, surface replacement, ditch cleaning, culvert inlet/outlet cleaning, culvert replacement, removing roadside vegetation

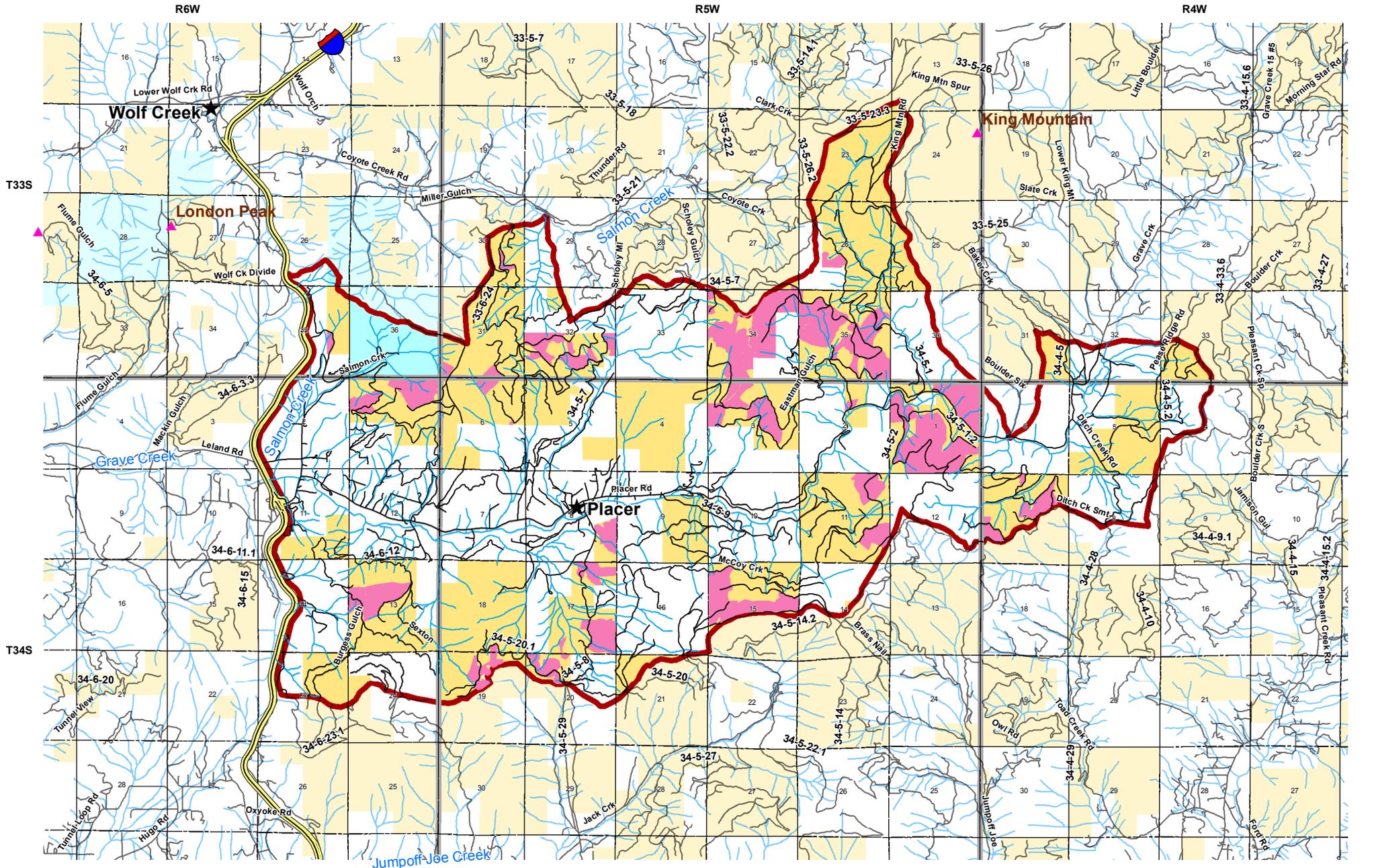
Road Construction (~1.18 miles)

- Vehicle route which is improved and maintained by mechanical means
- Regular and continuous use
- Developed and maintained system that serves the needs of users in an environmentally sound manner

Road Decommissioning (~2.86 miles)(will be analyzed in a separate Environmental Assessment)

- Identified through interdisciplinary process
- Would be sub soiled (or tilled), seeded, mulched, and planted to reestablish vegetation
- Cross drains, fills in stream channels, remove unstable areas, to restore hydrologic flow
- Closed with an earthen barrier or equivalent
- Road will not require further maintenance

Lower Graves Project Scoping Map



 Preliminary Project Units

 Project Boundary

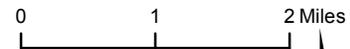
 Roads

 Streams

 Bureau of Land Management

 State

 Private



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.

Prepared By: SQueenFoster
Current Date: 1/3/2013